

WORKERS  
OF THE  
WORLD.  
UNITE

# THE MILITANT



Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America [Opposition]

VOLUME IV, NO. 19 [WHOLE NO. 78]

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, AUGUST 15, 1931

PRICE 5 CENTS

## The Wage-Cut Offensive

Towards Sharp Working Class Struggles of Resistance

American capitalism is now embarking more definitely upon its long cherished aim of reducing the working class standard. It is seeking thereby to shift the burden of its economic difficulties further onto the backs of the workers. At the very inception of the present crisis the signal was given in the demand of the most powerful banking institutions for a lower cost of production—a demand growing in volume until now wage cuts follow all along the line.

No matter how great or how slender their prospects for revival, to the capitalist rulers there is hardly any doubt that the commencement must of necessity imply a measure of stabilization on a lower level than hitherto. A greatly contracted market and an enormous capacity of production makes that course compulsory. The lower level sought is first of all to be applied to the working class. While sought as a way out of the present crisis, it will not at all serve to diminish the contradictions of capitalism. On the contrary, it increases the antagonisms of present class relations.

The increasing class antagonisms can be expected to be expressed in sharpened struggles on a scale which has not yet been witnessed in the United States. As a first sign, there has already been a considerable increase in the number of strikes and conflicts during the first half of 1931 as compared to the six months previous.

Any actual beginnings of revival could not seriously alter these perspectives as it would first of all involve an increase of the burden upon the workers' backs.

The concrete illustrations are already at hand in the present wage-cut drive. The most serious aspect of this drive is in the fact that it is gravitating towards the basic and important industries. No one will believe that the workers employed by the U. S. Steel Corporation have escaped wage cuts. The board of directors' meeting held recently evidently realized that it would not be so good to administer a wage-cut dramatically just at the moment, when much ado was made about the Hoover administration "opposing" wage-cuts. It would perhaps too seriously compromise the administration. But the actual cut is merely postponed for the moment and will soon be put over more quietly. The coal miners throughout the country have already suffered a drastic deterioration of their conditions both by direct wage-cuts, decrease of tonnage rate, mechanization, speed-up and the ravages of unemployment. Added to that comes the announcement of the Rockefeller interests of 20 percent wage cut to be applied at its Colorado mines.

On the railroads, continued improvements of heavier equipments and machinery have already eliminated several hundred thousand jobs while increasing the hauling capacity. During the period of 1920-1929, 370,000 men thus lost their jobs. This year an additional 300,000 are unemployed. With such economies the owners, representing an alleged \$5,000,000,000 investment claiming insufficient "earnings" and have appealed to the Interstate Commerce Commission for the right to levy a 15 per cent increase on all freight rates. It is significant however, that during the latest years these rates have tended to decrease in face of the increased competition of truck hauling. If the right to apply this increase is granted, it evidently cannot be applied because of this growing competition. It becomes clear, then, that it is in reality a preparation for a wage cut. Whether the application is denied or proved inapplicable, in either case it will be used as a basis for the demand for a wage-cut.

According to reports submitted by employers to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 210 establishments cut wages in June involving 25,645 workers with an average cut of 10.8 percent. Five plants reported wage increases affecting 182 workers. Inadequate as these reports are, they nevertheless help to bring out the general trend. Add to this the estimate made by the A. F. of L., fully as inadequate and extremely conservative, and it will help to make the picture clear. The A. F. of L. estimates that "if workers' incomes continue for the full year of 1931 at about the same level as the first half, they will lose \$10,500,000,000 from the 1929 level."

The employers attitude toward the unions in two instances of the present wage cut drive deserve particular attention. On July 12, the New York B. M. T. announced a new "agreement" with its 10,000 employees on the basis of a cut of 50 percent in the 2-cent-an-hour bonus paid for satisfactory work. It adds, "the motormen, being members of a union, are not affected by this agreement". This shows both the advantage of union organization as well as the fact that the B. M. T. is not yet ready to force the issue with a union. On the other hand there is the instance from the coal miners present situation. In Pennsylvania, during the present

strike, efforts were made by the Pittsburgh Terminal Coal company in particular to revive and put new life into the dead body of the U. M. W. to offset the growth of the National Miners Union. The strike now appears to be on the decline and evidently the operators are somewhat getting over their fear of the militant union for at the proposed Hoover conference on coal, the operators refused to sit jointly with the Lewis forces.

But it should not be forgotten for one moment that, for example, the coal operators' ignoring of all the unions in the field and continuing their brutal assaults upon the workers' standard, is due in a measure to the failure of the Centrist party leadership to utilize the real opportunity which were and still are available for a fighting united front. Let the National Miners Union take the steps for a genuine united front of the various sectional organizations which are split away from the deceitful U. M. W. and it will certainly mark the first serious hurdle in the way of the capitalist offensive. That is also the way to deal with the reformists and pseudo-progressives who in reality are only for the kind of "hurdles" which do not imply struggle. And the example of the coal miners is only one out of many.

Wage-cuts hit the workers in the most direct sense and become an important lever to help set them into motion against their class enemy. Regardless of all the servile and reasonable efforts of the capitalist labor agents to prevent their resistance the workers will move nevertheless, compelled by these circumstances. It will increase the abyss between the needs of the masses and the high paid gentry now in leadership of the existing major unions. New progressive currents will spring up within them and the opportunities for working class organization will advance also in the unorganized industries.

Even an upward conjuncture of American capitalist economy will fully embody such prospects. It will mean a real opportunity for Communist leadership. But the one essential step in the present situation, toward establishing it is a correct policy of welding the fighting ranks into a united front.

—A. S.

## Trotsky Greet Weekly Militant

National Committee of the Communist League of America (Opposition)  
Dear Comrades:

Our little group in Kadikoy was very happy to receive our old friend, the *Militant*, in a new form. Let us hope that the paper, with its regular weekly appearance will now exercise not only a doubled but a tenfold influence.

I am sending you an article on the latest turn in Stalinist policy. The world capitalist press violently exaggerated the significance of this turn from its standpoint, but from our standpoint, its significance cannot be estimated too highly. We are approaching a critical stage in the U. S. S. R., which will also have to have its effects inside the party and inside the International. The world crisis, the Spanish revolution the great events in Germany—all these put vast tasks before the *Militant*. We are fighting for genuinely scientific ideas and principles with inadequate technical, material and personal means. But correct ideas always end by making available for themselves the corresponding means and forces.

With best Communist greetings

Yours,

Kadikoy, July 19, 1931

L. TROTSKY.

## After the Massacre

### Chicago Opposition Condemns Murders of Negro Workers

CHICAGO.—

Immediately following the cold-blooded massacre by Chicago police of the Negro workers gathered on the South Side of the city to prevent the eviction of a 72-year old Negro woman, the Chicago branch of the Communist League of America (Opposition) issued a leaflet condemning the police murder and calling upon the workers for a united protest. The leaflet reads as follows:

On August 3, unemployed workers under the leadership of the Unemployment Council, attempted to stop the eviction of a 72-year old Negro lady. They were met by squads of armed police—and three of the Negro workers were brutally murdered. Besides killing 3 unemployed workers, the Chicago police seriously wounded another, and arrested and clubbed scores of others.

The bosses—and their paid flunkies—have the blood of these unemployed workers on their hands! The bosses and their system are responsible for the murders of these three Negro workers!

The bosses through Mayor Gernak, have called together their lesser flunkies—Negro and white preachers, politicians, editors—to increase their efforts to break up the ever-growing unemployment movement by doing charity in crumbs, by mass arrests of working class leaders,

and by police terror. For example, Mayor Gernak orders evictions stopped in the Negro sections for "a short time" till "the riots" calm down. We workers must answer by forcing the landlords and their city officials to stop ALL evictions in ALL working class neighborhoods! The bosses and their flunkies are also organizing charity campaigns to give "bread crumb" relief to "worthy" families. We must expose this fake charity and fight for immediate unemployment insurance for all unemployed workers!

Thirdly, and most important, the bosses are increasing their drive against all militant workers, particularly against the Communists, because the Communists are the leaders in the working class struggles. The bosses are trying to build a smoke screen of a "Red scare" in order to divert attention away from the evictions, starvation, increased misery and police attacks upon our class. Expose this smoke screen! Answer the attacks of the bosses with greater unity, more solidarity, and bigger organized struggles against unemployment and wage cuts!

The Communist party must immediately call a genuine united front conference to mobilize a mass movement of all workers against the bosses' offensive and to increase the struggle against unemployment.

Down with the Red scare! Defend the workers' right to free speech and free assembly!

Protest against the murder of the three unemployed. Demand the immediate release of the 22 arrested.

Fight for the six-hour day and the five day week with no reductions in pay. Fight for immediate unemployment insurance.

Build block unemployment councils of employed and unemployed workers.

Demand long-term credits for the Soviet Union from the bosses in order to give immediate work to tens of thousands of American workers and to help build the only workers' country—Soviet Russia!

Chicago Branch Communist League of America (Left Opposition).

Since the leaflet was issued, the party press reports an imposing demonstration of tens of thousands of Negro and white workers at the funeral of the militant Negroes murdered by Chicago's uniformed thugs.

That much worse. The end of police brutality can be produced only with the end of capitalist brutality and exploitation. The brutality can be resisted—not with reports but with the united front of the workers, determined that they shall enjoy as many rights of democratic procedure as they can extort by their strength from the capitalist dictators.

The Wickersham reports are a sign of the times in the sense stated above. The master class realizes the growing impatience of the masses. It gives them the assurances of "improvements"—in the form of promises, the food with which they always feed the workers,

## Wickersham's Exposures

Capitalism's Agents Reveal a Few of Its Festering Sores

The Wickersham commission appointed by president Hoover has made another report public—this time on the condition of police rule throughout the country. Drawn up in the most statesmanlike language, the report nevertheless gives a damning portrayal of the corruption prevalent in that arm of capitalist majesty which is most directly entrusted with the preservation of property and its "rights". What is said is not particularly new. Every child in the street is well acquainted with the fact that corruption, bribery, degeneration and brutality rule the roost in the police departments of the country. Everybody knows that the "third degree" barbarism is practised in virtually every police station in the United States—particularly against the worker who cannot—like malfeasants in office or high-caste gangsters and gunmen—hire an expensive lawyer, and more particularly against the radical worker who consciously directs his efforts towards the improvement of the lot of his class.

Nor is the labor movement presented with anything new in the previous reports of the commission. Nor, further, should it be overcome with any gratitude to these "public men" who have revealed superficially some of the festering sores of the capitalist society which nurtures even their expositors. The commission is not opposed to the deportation of "aliens". It is solely concerned with eliminating the brutal "features" of the deportations—the breaking up of families arbitrarily, the frame-ups that are too obvious the arrests in the dark of

the moon, the deportation camps that have been established in all but name.

There is even less need for illusions about the concern the commission shows over the Mooney-Billings case. To them—confronted with the angry protests of hundreds of thousands of workers for years—it is only a question of maintaining the prestige of a cynically revealed capitalist class justice. The Mooney case is for them a "violation" of justice. To the conscious workers, it is the logical outcome of capitalist class persecution. Mooney and Billings will not come out of the living tomb because Messrs. Wickersham and Co. are "shocked". They will be released when the workers in their united strength compel the jailors to open the prison gates. The deportees will not be turned away from the class to which they belong, from the labor unions and revolutionary organizations to which they are devoted, just because Wickersham thinks that the procedure should not be so "raw". The deportation scandals of Hoover, Doak and Co. will be brought to an end when the workers realize that it is one form of the attack upon their whole class which must be resisted unitedly. The savagery of the police will not be ended by a bourgeois exposure. We have had these revelations from similar sources from time immemorial. They are a periodical sop to a working class that is becoming restless and discontented and requires another proof of the remedial ability of capitalist decadence. But at too obvious the arrests in the dark of

## Almost 1,000 Pesetas Already Sent for the Spanish Opposition Press

As a result of a highly successful picnic last Sunday held under the auspices of the New York branch of the League for the benefit of our Spanish comrades, the fund we are raising to help the Opposition in Spain to issue its weekly organ took a sharp jump upwards. A splendid spirit prevailed among the comrades and sympathizers at the picnic and following a short talk by comrade Swaback on the significance of the Spanish events, a good collection was taken up. The total income of the picnic after all expenses are deducted, has come to \$35.94.

As we go to press, our Chicago com-

rades inform us that they too are organizing a picnic for the Spanish Opposition, to be held on Sunday, August 23, at Elston Forest Preserves (see other page for ad), at which, in addition to other attractions an Iberian atmosphere will be created by the cooking and sale of tortillas, hot chile and tamales. All the profits of the picnic will go to our Spanish comrades.

Not all the other branches are quite up to snuff in this campaign, but we are expecting them to get into full swing in short order. Toronto reports a contribution shortly, a goodly percentage of which is to come from donations made

by members of the party—a good sign which should lead the comrades everywhere to make a similar attempt.

All told now, more than eighty dollars have been collected in the fund, which, at the present rate of exchange, comes to almost one thousand Spanish pesetas. The money has already been sent to Spain and will continue to be forwarded as rapidly as it is received at our office. The need of our Spanish comrades is very great. The situation offers magnificent possibilities for the growth of our movement. The American militants must be at the very top of the list—rivalled by nobody—in the aid they contribute to

## Mass Arrests In Silk Strike

Left Wing Makes a Half Turn to Unity

Confronted with no serious break in the ranks of the Paterson silk strikers, the police agents of the bosses are proceeding to the attempt at breaking the backbone of the movement by the policy of mass arrests and the clubbing of pickets. Last Tuesday alone brought about the arrest of fifty-two strikers. While most of the pickets were seized by the police in front of a Paterson dye plant, more than a dozen others were arrested at the conclusion of a sharp encounter between the police and strikers who attempted to cross the city line leading to Clifton, neighboring upon Paterson where the strikers are attempting to get the support of the many silk workers employed. At the city line, the police threw a cordon across the street and for hours kept a mass of strikers from passing through. However, the militancy of the workers finally prevailed and despite police efforts, a number of them succeeded in breaking through the cordon of police. The latter thereupon pursued the pickets and succeeded in arresting fifteen of them.

Significant in the whole incident, which is but one of many others of a similar kind, is the fact that according to the reports the workers are members of the amalgamated A. F. of L. locals. The militancy of these workers, despite the fact that they are not affiliated to the Left wing union leaves no room for doubt that the basis for a powerful united movement of the two contending sides in the workers' half of the strike, not only exists but can be strengthened with the most effective results for the strike.

The principal barrier in the road of the strike's development remains, as before, the fact that in reality two separate strikes are being conducted in Paterson, with two separate strike committees, picket lines and unions. To overcome this extremely harmful situation, fostered on the one hand by the Musteite-Lovestone leadership of the A. F. of L., which is more concerned with a speedy settlement with the bosses than with the spreading of the strike on a broad scale, and on the other hand by the Stalinist leadership of the National Textile Workers Union, which stubbornly puts its sectarian interests against the general interests of the movement—the *Militant* has from the very beginning proposed a genuine united front.

The *Daily Worker* now reports that "The United Front General Strike Committee has decided upon a definite mode of procedure to again attempt to bring about unity with the rank and file of workers who are still under the domination of the fake union. A committee of fifteen was elected by the strike committee this afternoon to present a program of unity to the rank and file workers of the Associated—A. F. of L., the chief points of which are that a committee of twenty-five rank and file shop workers from each union meet to discuss methods to obtain unity, that the basis of discussion shall be one united strike committee, one united picket line and a united front shop committee in each shop." (9-12-31.)

Such a meeting is a step in the right direction only if it is followed by other far more important and effective steps. If this meeting of workers from both unions is to be another of the "united fronts from below" made so "famous" by the Stalinists, then it is better that it not be held. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred such a procedure has only been a cheap sham, an excuse, a cover under which the real united front is smothered. It is imperatively necessary to conduct the broadest agitation among the ranks, the numbers of the A. F. of L. unions. That is the basis of the united front. But this remains hopelessly inadequate if these members are not given a program of action which they can develop to obtain the adherence to the united front of their organizations.

It is therefore necessary to take the next step immediately—precious, invaluable time has been lost. The Left wing must propose now—not after the strike, when it exercises its "self-criticism" in the party press, that a joint conference of the two unions be held at which methods of joint strike action and direction shall be worked out. Merely to approach a few isolated A. F. of L. members to join a united front "meeting" is not enough. It does not succeed in putting the reformist leaders—from Matthews to Muste and Gilroy—to the wall with the pointed demand that they join in united action. Unless this logical step is taken, the present "united front turn" of the Left wing will disappear into the sand like so many of its other tragic farces of the recent past.

## After Prussian Elections

Stalinists Trail Behind Demagogues of the Hitlerite Camp

The referendum on the dissolution of the Prussian Diet initiated by the German Fascists and behind which the German Stalinists drew their followers in a miserable and disastrous caricature of a "united front", came to an end last Saturday, with a vote a few millions short of the amount necessary to accomplish the desired end. As a farcical aftermath, the bourgeois press here and the Fascist press in Germany are engaging in mutual criticism with the official Stalinist press—each claiming that the other "sabotaged the united front" and did not turn out in full force on Sunday to accomplish the dissolution of the Diet. The leadership in these recriminations is taken by the *Rote Fahne*, organ of the German party and . . . *Pravda*, once Lenin's mouthpiece. The latter is bitter at the Fascists for having come to the defense of the Diet by sabotaging the vote at the last minute.

The truth of the matter even without detailed reports from Germany which

we are awaiting, is undoubtedly that the Communist workers and sympathizers took the whole matter with more than a grain of salt, if not with actual revulsion against the policy of the official party leaders. When the Fascists first initiated the referendum, making the maximum out of the capital demagogic created by them, the party justly condemned the whole affair roundly and revealed its true nature to the workers. The *Rote Fahne* could not find terms sufficiently harsh to designate the maneuver of the potential German Mussolinis. But without much time having passed, the party made a complete turn about face and capitulated before the nationalist demagoguery which they had at first condemned. The expectations of the Thaelmanns and Remmeles was to win the Fascist workers to the Communist side by this perverted united front. In actuality nothing of the kind occurred. On the contrary, as has already been shown by the events, the social democratic workers were driven away from the Communists, against whom the socialist leaders cleverly exploited the "unity with the Fascists". The only "positive" result of the campaign has been that the party has won over a few hardshell nationalist leaders, generals, army officers and similar riff-raff of bourgeois society who announced their adherence to "Communism" on the basis of the fact that the Communist party alone has not "betrayed the nation", like the notorious Fascist, Lieutenant Scherzinger, who is orientating towards the Communist party on the basis of the fact that there are "no Jews in the Central Committee of the Communist party".

Such a trend of events can only signify the gravest dangers for German Communism.

the militant revolutionists who are leading the fight in Spain under our banner.

Since last week we have received the following contributions (unless otherwise noted, donations are from New York):  
Total last week: \$22.70—James Costello, Youngstown: \$1.00—M. Meyer, Boston: \$.25—M. Shapiro, Boston: \$.25—J. Levinburg, Boston: \$.15—New York list No. 1: \$9.75—Harry Milton: \$.10—Julio S.: \$1.00—A. Nacio: \$.50—M. Morris: \$1.00—Carl Anthony: \$.20—125th St. meeting: \$4.27—Bob: \$1.00—New York picnic: \$35.94—J. Dreyer: \$1.00—J. Berlin: \$1.00. Total to date: \$81.91.