

### Pay Reduction in the Building Trades

#### A Blow at the Workers' Standard Throughout All the Trades

The wage cut drive in the building industry now initiated in several large cities simultaneously reveals a concerted plan of action. In the cities of New York and Chicago alone the demanded 25% cut will involve more than 200,000 workers. But the objective is a far greater one. The objective is to strike at this section of "privileged" workers, to more effectively pave the way for the reduction of the workers' standard throughout. A devilishly well fitting complement to the much heralded Hoover Home Building Program.

The Building Trades Employers' Association hardly awaited a reply to their proposed wage cut, it immediately became a virtual ultimatum. It was practically offered as: "Take it or leave it." In this they counted on the effective assistance of the lashing whip of unemployment.

The extent of the increasing tempo of wage-reductions recently applied can very well be understood from the late reports made by the Department of Labor. Up to September 15, when the U. S. Steel Corporation took over leadership in wage reductions, there had been during 1931, 2,257 cuts-involving 315,229 workers. In the ensuing two months alone there were 1,074 reductions, involving 290,082 workers.

With this ultimatum the wage cut drive is carried into the very center of the A. F. of L. unions. For among the exclusive craft union make-up of the A. F. of L., the building trades still constitute the actual backbone. But it is also this exclusiveness of craft organization and craft ideology, terribly antiquated in conditions of modern class relations, which spells the greatest handicap to these unions.

What will be the answer of the Building Trades Unions to this ultimatum? Will they resist? It should be clear that failure to resist at the outset will soon start them on the toboggan slide with one wage cut following another. William Green and his A. F. of L. hierarchy have repeatedly made grandiose declarations that the unions will resist wage cuts. Now the A. F. of L. backbone faces the test. But there are no indications that this leadership will back up its declaration with preparation for action. The Chicago union leadership has already offered a compromise. This is how much the grandiose declarations of Bill Green and his hierarchy mean.

For public consumption the employers have for some time held up in horror the example of the high wages in the building industry. The fact, however, that employment is extremely seasonal, that the building trades worker manages to keep a job only a few months out of the year is never mentioned. Though now glib promises are being made that a wage-reduction will increase building and thus increase the jobs. Yet it is a well-known fact that the amount of building to be done does not at all depend upon the wage level of the workers in that industry. As one example we may cite the instances of cities where building trades wages have remained low, or where cuts have been accepted,

that did not bring an increase in building. As a second instance it is well to remind building trades workers that the present crisis has already seriously diminished building requirements; and with a general reduction of the working class standard of living one could not at all expect an increase in residential buildings. Thus wage reductions will rather react in the reverse of the promises made.

Within the building trades unions the corrupt practice of business unionism flourishes. The miserable incompetence of the leadership stands out glaringly. A host of useless petty grafting-business agents has infested these unions with the general result that the organized position is today very seriously weakened. The power of the organization is not at all maintained on the job. Workers find employment today in practically every instance only by accepting a wage considerably below the official scale. Some unsuspecting worker might think that it would be better to reduce the official wage scale to the level of what is actually being paid—and this is a quite widespread belief. They forget, however, that the minute a cut of the official scale is accepted it will be as much reflected in the wage actually paid. That will be immediately cut further also.

Thus the wage cut ultimatum looms as a real problem before the building trades unions. Added to this is the present heavy scourge of unemployment. Meek submission to the employers' demands cannot at all solve the problem but only aggravate it. It can only result in a further reduction of the workingman's standard. An aggressive attitude is necessary. The unions do not face a question of maintaining what is being charged to be a high wage scale but of maintaining a bare possibility of existence. Acceptance of a wage cut can never bring relief to the workers either for their maintenance of a standard nor for the problem of unemployment. To find a solution for these problems it is first of all necessary to prepare well to

utilize all the power of the organization to resist the attack, to resist the wage cut. Secondly, it becomes necessary to give serious consideration to the reduction of the workday so as to actually help relieve the unemployment situation. This is where the six hour work day without reduction of pay should be particularly

considered.  
The building trades workers unions today constitute the backbone of the organized labor movement. As such they should show the lead in resisting the general attacks upon the workers' standard of living.  
—A. S.

## Morgenstern and Goodman Sentenced

### A Letter from the Two Philadelphia Defendants

Moyamensing Prison  
Philadelphia, Pa.  
Monday, Feb. 8, 1932

Dear Comrades:

This is our answer to Judge Reed: "We are members of the C. L. of A. (O.) We fight under the banner held high by comrade Trotsky. We are Communists, not for a moment have we been fooled by the trickery of the court's legal liberalistic tinting."

"We are not here as criminals. Nor as repentant sinners. It is a year since we were arrested for daring to tell the workers the cause of their misery and for urging them to struggle unitedly against worsening conditions. Has capitalism solved any of the crying contradictions of society? Have not conditions grown worse for the masses of people? For this you will suppress us. What matters your vaunted civil rights? For us—civil terror, but that solves nothing. Nor can the cancer of capitalism be eliminated under capitalism. Only the proletarian revolution can do that."

"Your sentence shows that it is you who stand in fear of us. It is not we who are afraid. High indeed would rise the wrath of the workers against the arbitrary repression against us revolutionaries, were it not for the sabotage of stupid and corrupt bureaucrats put in charge of working class organizations. "We are here as fighters of your starvation system, not as criminals. Your class has grown rich and powerful on our poverty and degradation; has flourished on the blood and tears of the working class. For wanting to change all this; for our struggle to overthrow

capitalism, to emancipate society from human slavery and to build a Communist society where exploitation and hunger no longer exist, you persecute us. Your verdict we can only accept as a verdict of capitalist class justice. Today you pick us out because you think us small and weak. Tomorrow you will stretch further—to every brave voice of working class freedom. You jail us; you can never jail the ideas we stand for. The day will soon be here when your whole system, already doomed, will stand before the bar of proletarian justice. HAIL THE REVOLUTION!  
(Signed) Leon Goodman and Bernard Morgenstern

This is the first opportunity we have had to write and we hasten to do so. Judge Reed who passed sentence on us for violation of the State's notorious Flynn Sedition Act gave us ninety days in Moyamensing. This is as "punishment", he said, for teaching the overthrow of capitalism. The lawyers filed appeal to the Supreme Court. Bail has not yet been furnished.

We were very fortunate to be placed in the same cell. There are about 45 party members and party sympathizers in the same prison. Forty of them are here for resisting an eviction. Our two hour period in the prison yard permits us to fraternize with the other comrades.

This despite the I. L. D.'s sabotage of our defense and the vituperation against us.

With Red greetings to all our comrades,  
L. GOODMAN.  
B. MORGENSTERN.

## R. R. Fakers & Bosses Join Hands

### To Improve The Health of «Our» Industry

Messages of congratulation and praise were today pouring in on the leading lights in the drama successfully enacted at Chicago, Feb. 1st, to "voluntarily" cut \$25,000,000 from the rail workers' pay checks and give it to the coupon clippers. The plot in the drama contains both comedy and tragedy. The comic part consisted of the farcical spokesmen on the part of the labor spokesmen, headed by D. R. Robertson, to fight the wage cut. The tragic part of the seventeen day Chicago strike was the added sacrifice and suffering it brought to the railroad workers for the benefit of the parasites who live on the labor of others.

The 17 day Chicago wage conference, which began on Jan. 14th, and ended on Feb. 1st, was merely a farcical display of controversy to fool the railroad workers into believing that their leaders were putting up a real fight against the wage slash. We maintain that those who spoke for the railroads at the conference and also those who were supposed to speak for labor, all knew what the outcome of the conference would be and this was also quite clearly set forth in the daily press reports released on the day the conference opened. One United Press report dated at Chicago, Jan. 14th, under the following headline, reads in part as follows:

"Union Chiefs and Presidents Seek to Provide Work for 700,000 Through 10 Per Cent Wage Cut".

"Chicago, Jan. 14 (UP)—Capital and labor sat down across a conference table today determined to provide dividends for rail investors and work for unemployed rail men."

"The decision expected was a 10 per cent general wage cut for union workers. This will save the railroads \$250,000,000, sufficient to meet interest requirements and provide work for many of the industry's 700,000 jobless."

"Two white-haired leaders, each long in the service of the railroads, led the conference groups. These were Daniel Willard, president of the Baltimore & Ohio road, chairman of the presidents'

group, and David B. Robertson, union chairman."

"Both Robertson and Willard were optimistic that an agreement would be reached."

Up to this date no one has explained how this \$250,000,000 wage cut is going to furnish work for 700,000 jobless railroad workers. But of course, the conference was not held to get anything for the workers; it was held for the special benefit of bond and stock holders. And organized capitalists were jubilant over the outcome, although they knew it in advance, because it netted them \$215,000,000 more profit taken from the meager earnings of the workers.

### Labor Bureaucrats Play the Role of Puppets

Even by reading, the daily press reports, a worker could learn that the Chicago railroad wage conference was nothing but a mock drama where the \$15,000 a year labor officials played the part of that many puppets sitting on the knees of the railroad officials. And for the readers' benefit we will again quote a few excerpts from a press report appearing in one of the big dailies dated Chicago, Feb. 1st:

"The final scene, enacted in the conference room of a loop hotel, climaxed 17 days of negotiations that were without precedent in the history of all railroad relations. Never before had the two factions pooled their efforts to solve a problem of like nature or magnitude."

"As labor made the decision known, its chief, David Brown Robertson, gave emphasis to the reason for the concession."

### Now Listen to "Davy"

"In the hope that our action," he said "may improve the health" of our industry, may improve the relations of management and employees, may stimulate revival of business and advance general welfare, we have decided to accept the proposal."

Brother railroad workers, we will ask you to read the above press quotation from Robertson for several reasons. He was the chairman of that bunch of "chiefs" which is supposed to look after the interests of railroad labor. David, whom Edward Keating, the editor of Labor, affectionately calls Davy, is a high-priced labor "spokesman". The poor and hard-working locomotive firemen pay Davy \$15,000 a year and expenses. Now Davy, together with the other twenty chiefs, decides to take \$215,000,000 from the pay envelopes of the workers and give it to the owners of railroad stocks and bonds to "improve the health of our industry". Mind you, Davy speaks of the railroads as "our industry". The lowly part of the jobs and part-time workers in "our industry" does not seem to bother him much, if we are to judge from the way this wage movement was handled from beginning to end. Davy also states that the wage cut was accepted so that it "may improve the relations of management and employees". You section men and other part-time and poorly paid workers please note. However, don't take it too seriously, because what Mr. Robertson really means is, the relationship between the railroad and brotherhood officials. We will quote below Mr. Willard's statement to the press after the conclusion of the conference, where he joins with Robertson in his hope and wish. The difference is that Dan Willard speaks for the real directors of the show. We quote from which we quoted "Davy":

"Dan" Joins with "Davy"

"With you, we indulge in the hope, the result of this conference may tend to improve relations between railway management and employees, and also tend to stimulate the revival of business and promote the general welfare."

Note the above paragraph carefully; note that the spokesmen of both groups at the wage conference join in the same wish, namely, that the result of the conference may increase the profit of the railroads at the expense of the workers. That is exactly what their joint wish and hope amounts to, when boiled down to actual facts.

Brother railroad workers, the whole thing is but another act added to the long string of betrayals by the brotherhood bureaucrats whose high salaries place them far closer to Willard and his group than to the workers whom they are supposed to represent. That is exactly why the two groups cast their joint support to the railroads. The brotherhood "chiefs" never did a thing to organize or mobilize the railroad workers for united action against the wage cut which was looming on the industrial horizon for the past year or more. These over-paid drones have never stirred to organize the motor transport workers. Instead of organizing the bus and truck drivers they engage in the foolish business of trying to put restrictions on their operations, thinking that this will please the railroads.

\$15,000 a year labor officials like Robertson and his kind will never organize the workers nor lead them anywhere but to defeat. The fake wage conference at Chicago is but cumulative evidence of this. A minority movement must be organized and developed in the brotherhoods to help the membership not only to drive these misleaders from office, but to drive them from the labor movement in disgrace.  
(To be continued)

## The Minneapolis Branch of the Left Opposition in the Fight for the Unemployed

### MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

As we go to press, six workers are on trial before Judge Carroll for participating in the unemployed meeting at Bridge Square on February 4th. About 50 policemen, according to the capitalist press, on the orders of Mayor Anderson, charged about two thousand workers assembled to hear the speakers. A magnificent resistance was put up by the crowd which laid low and sent to the hospital 4 policemen, although the latter were armed with murderous saps and black-jacks. Working women were especially prominent in the fight, kicking, scratching and breaking lath posters over the heads of the cops. A dozen or more

comrades and sympathizers sustained wounds and one comrade is in danger of losing an eye from a vicious attack at the hands of a cowardly cop with a sap.

The Daily Worker of January 9, 1932 carries a vicious slanderous attack against our comrades, inventing a story about Oppositionists beating up a party comrade. The whole story is just one more despicable Stalinist lie, unfounded and without any actual basis. The remarks concerning the "counter-revolutionary" leaflet can be judged for what they are worth from what follows.

Below is the leaflet issued by the Minneapolis Branch of the Communist League calling for a united defense movement for the arrested and for a Free Speech Conference.

### STATEMENT:

#### SAVE FEBRUARY 4th VICTIMS

Mayor Anderson has again shown his true colors! On February 4th, he ordered his police, armed with saps, to crack the skulls of a peaceful meeting of unemployed workers at Bridge Square. The meeting was called by the Minneapolis Unemployed Council to discuss the present crisis and to propose a solution.

The brutal attack of the police is an attempt to take away an elementary right, hard-won in many struggles. And no one can deny that the Farmer-Labor Mayor was elected over the Republican Kunze on the promise (now violated) of free assembly for workers and adequate relief for the unemployed. A year ago, when our headquarters were raided and closed by Kunze's police, Anderson, then prospective candidate for office, volunteered to defend the right of free speech and assembly in court. Can we now take seriously the Mayor's excuse of traffic hazards? Shriners, Templars, or any capitalist movement get the Square—or any public street—without

question. Our Mayor had 50 police break up a peaceful meeting; but none to direct traffic and protect the meeting.

THE MAYOR IS HIDING SOMETHING! He does not tell us that the Rands, the Deckers, the Pillsburys who control the relief funds and city budget dictate to the "Farmer-Labor" Mayor to cut relief to the bone, to cut the wages of city employees, etc. THEY WANT NO PUBLIC CRITICISM OR PROTEST ON THE PART OF THE WORKERS. Anderson does their bidding. On February 4th, he came out in the open as the YES-MAN OF THE EMPLOYERS. He proposes to relieve unemployment by slugging the unemployed.

Thousands of workers, enthusiastic for the "Labor" candidate, reproached the Communists for "splitting the labor ticket" in putting forward a Communist worker for Mayor. The Communists predicted that Mr. Anderson's middle-class reformism could give no benefits to the workers, but only serve the bosses. Only through organization, they said, can workers gain. This prophecy is now fulfilled.

Three women and three men face jail sentences for challenging the right of Mayor Anderson to forcefully break up a peaceful meeting. Their conviction, to any thinking worker, questions the right of any body of workers to meet and carry on business. The fight for Unemployment Insurance and immediate relief must go on. An effective fight can only be carried on by winning back the workers' right to meet and express themselves.

This latest attack of the bosses must be combatted by a determined united defense movement. The defendants, members of various labor organizations (A. F. of L. Unions, Unemployment Councils, I. L. D., Communist Party, as

well as unorganized) must not be left to the mercy of the capitalist court. The Citizens' Alliance is anxious to convert this case into a threat to anybody who raises his voice against starvation.

The Communist League of America (Opposition) calls for the unity of all labor organizations, regardless of race, creed or political belief, to rally behind the defendants and the International Labor Defense, now handling the case. The Communist League itself, recognizing the need for workers' solidarity, unhesitatingly throws its lot in with the defendants and will utilize all its resources in their behalf. A FREE SPEECH CONFERENCE should be called immediately to organize the fight.

We place our organization at the disposal of the defense committee, and will carry out any work assigned us for saving these workers from capitalist class vengeance.

COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF AMERICA (OPPOSITION)  
Minneapolis Branch

## Evictions

In European countries the scene is common enough. But in plutocratic America, the scene comes as a refreshing experience to a revolutionist. We refer to the rent strike carried on with militant enthusiasm in the Bronx, New York. Hundreds of windows of a half dozen scattered apartment houses carry stickers announcing the tenants' within on strike.

They are striking against the exorbitant rents—rents which have not come down an iota since the so-called prosperity days. They are striking for those modern conveniences which even a much reduced rental entitles them to have. They are striking against a landlord who doesn't want them "damn Communist tenants" anyway. They are striking against a Socialist landlord . . . who wants "to see blood" before he gives in. And blood he has seen. On Monday, the pig-faced marshall came with a squadron of police and detectives and three families were evicted. Among these were a family with a sick child. The worker-tenants fought valiantly.

As the misery of the workers increases, rent strikes will become a more and more common feature in New York. The committee in charge of the strike is to be commended for its insistence as part of the strike settlement, the recognition of the house committee. These house committees can and must become house nuclei.

The rent strikes must be spread to poorer districts of the city. The party has initiated these strikes in a neighborhood where they are numerically strong. (The party co-operative houses are in the immediate neighborhood.) The rent strikes must be spread. They must be more widely organized. They must be made a powerful lever to aid those for whom they were originally intended—the poor proletariat of the entire country.

—WORKER CORRESPONDENT.

## The Annual Heresy Trial

Almost a year ago, the party held a mass trial here in New York to show the workers—that "the Communist party will not tolerate any trace of white chauvinism within its ranks—"

The sacrificial lamb in that case was August Yokinen, a Finn, who had uttered expressions of anti-Negro bias. In a lynching atmosphere, the high priests, Hathaway and Moore, the prosecuting and defense attorneys, together offered up Yokinen to cover the failure of the party leadership to educate the party rank and file against anti-Negro prejudices. Yokinen was expelled. Immediately afterwards he was arrested by the vultures of the labor department and held for deportation. The party was forced to launch a movement to demand his release. Contrary to the expectations of Hathaway et al, this spectacle did not eradicate white chauvinism from the revolutionary movement. From time to time the Daily Worker has reported its manifestations.

The latest took place in N. T. W. I. U. A worker in the needle trades, Burns, has been accused of white chauvinism. A mass trial was ordered. It took place on Feb. 7th in the same hall in which Yokinen was read out of the party. In place of Hathaway as prosecuting attorney we had the notorious bureaucrat Ben Gold; in place of Moore, Alexander. The faces, the actors were different but the farce was the same. Gold spoke first. He made two points: he admitted, in anticipating the argument of the defense, that the leadership of the union was at fault in "not fighting insistently against white chauvinism", but held it necessary to make an example of Burns to prove to the Negro masses that the union really means to unite the masses and wipe out white chauvinism. He asked for Burns' expulsion from the union.

Alexander jesuitically argued that Burns was guilty but that his guilt was not as enormous nor as horrendous as Shylock-Gold had made it out to be. Alexander, following Moore's line of a year before almost word for word, described Burns as a victim of capitalist class ideology and of the leadership of the union, which should have fought in the ranks of the union against "this poison". He proposed in place of "expulsion, a period of probation in which Burns was to be assigned special work:

in the coming strike he is to be in the forefront of the workers' defense corps against the gangster attacks; he is to bring into the union an unestimated number of Negro workers, and he is to sell a certain number of Liberators.

Then Burns took the floor to make a statement of denouement. In Yokinen they had a meek lamb who agreed 'that he was all they said about him. But in Burns they caught a Tartar. Until he spoke, it was not clear what the specific charges against him were. It appears that Burns and a Negro organizer got into a personal dispute over a typewriter in the office of the union; that they had heated words, freely insulting each other which, by a process familiar to Stalinists, passed into blows! With unconscious poetic justice Burns called Gold, Mr. Gold, accused him of discrimination in bringing only him to trial, criticized him and his fellow bureaucrats for not instructing him in what was white chauvinism and race hatred. He also accused the Daily Worker of exaggerating his statements. It was remarkable that the hundreds of party members and sympathizers in the hall took this last charge as a matter of course. It was obvious that they were aware of the Daily's policy of exaggeration.

Burns' statement was really, though not intentionally, a terrific indictment of the bureaucracy in the union. Not all of Gold's demagogic in rebuttal could cover this up. The blows Burns dealt were too telling. The workers' jury brought in a verdict of guilty with a recommendation of probation with assigned tasks. Gold's plea for expulsion was refused.

This is a good sign. It demonstrated that the Stalinists can't always get away with such raw frame-ups. In our opinion, they should have brought in a recommendation to expel Gold from the union and along with him his fellow bureaucrats. Spectacles such as this do not and cannot eradicate racial prejudices. What is needed is, as the Militant remarked on March 1st, 1931, apropos of the Yokinen trial, "Education—an atmosphere free from demagoguery, hypocrisy and incitement; an atmosphere created by teachers of the proletariat, not by terrorizers."  
—T. STAMM.

## Tampa Tobacco Workers Struggle

Florida, winter playground of the bourgeoisie, is the latest scene of capitalist oppression against the workers.

On November 7th the workers of Tampa gathered to honor the memory of Lenin at the Ybor City Labor Temple. The meeting was well attended. A majority of those attending were tobacco workers who responded to the call of the Tobacco Workers Industrial Union. The meeting was running to a successful conclusion when the doors were suddenly burst open and a cordon of police aided by American Legion thugs rushed into the hall clubbing and terrorizing those present. During the melee a shot was fired and a policeman dropped. Fifteen workers were arrested.

To try these fifteen workers, a laboring jury was judiciously picked. The verdict from these twelve good (to their masters) men and true (to their class) was never in doubt. The workers behaved staunchly in the court room. They showed the entire proceedings from the raid to the trial to be engineered by the Tampa Tobacco Manufacturers Association. They called upon the workers to defend their union and to pay no

heed to the efforts at "red baiting" of the manufacturers' hirelings.

For this these workers have just been sentenced to from one to ten years in the penitentiary. A new trial has been denied them. But the workers of Tampa are not discouraged. These workers of Florida have shown that they can take it—in a revolutionary way. MacDonald, one of the workers arrested and now in prison, writes: "The concerted efforts of . . . capitalist henchmen with all their mass arrests, lockouts, clubbings, evictions and coercion have not shaken in the least the solidarity of the Tampa Tobacco Workers. On the contrary, the solidarity of the workers has been fused in the struggle and they stand today more determined than ever to stand shoulder to shoulder in their fight for decent working and living conditions."

The struggle of the Florida tobacco workers is our struggle. This new capitalist frame-up carried to its conclusion, again, lends emphasis to the imperative necessity of class unity from coast to coast and from border to border to defend the elementary right of free speech for the working class.