

EDITORIAL

The Silk Workers' Battle

In the general resurgence of labor militancy which has greeted the inauguration of the NRA the general strike of the silk workers holds today a place of outstanding prominence and significance.

So far the strikers have stood solid. More, they have steadily spread out the strike over a wider area while frustrating all maneuvers to induce them to return to work without a satisfactory settlement.

THE UNIONS IN THE STRIKE

The trade union situation in the silk strike is an especially interesting example of how a mass revolt can surmount old divisions, and make its way through the most complicated forms.

The main directing force in the strike comes from the Associated Silk Workers. This organization came into existence and remained for years as an independent union.

MAIN FEATURES OF THE STRIKE

The strike has been distinguished by several other important features. It is national in scope—practically all the silk-producing centers are tied up—and from this the strike derives much of its exceptional power.

A black spot in the strike situation is the activity of the National Textile Workers Union. This organization, due to bad leadership, lost its opportunity in the industry.

The composition of the silk strike leadership, and the course it has followed up till now, give promise of a successful outcome of the struggle which will lay the ground for a big revival and development of progressive unionism in the textile industry.

ection of the strike has been taken over by a broad collective group of militants, actual silk workers, who are rooted in the industry and experienced in its union struggles.

STRIKE POLICY

The strike policy that will yield the best results is clear enough:

Systematic exposure of the strike-breaking machinations of the NRA administration. No illusions about it. No confidence in it. The workers can rely only on their own strength.

Work for a single union as well as for a single strike committee. Tighten the bonds between the striking units in the various silk centers in a single strike committee of the American Federation of Silk Workers.

In addition to the above line of policy, which flows logically out of the whole situation, a couple of additional suggestions may be offered.

With every passing day the meager resources of the strikers dwindle and the bosses will count on breaking their ranks with the club of hunger.

The Federation strike committee has been perfectly right in its head-on struggle against the disorganizing activities of the N. T. W. and in rejecting its maneuvers for a joint strike committee.

The real test of the silk strike is still ahead. It has been a comparatively peaceful affair so far while the attempt was being made to suffocate the revolt quietly with the poison gas generated by the NRA.

THE REAL TEST AHEAD

The strike wave now sweeping over the country, of which the silk workers movement is a part, represents the beginning of a great class awakening of the American workers.

The silk workers, who stand today in the forefront of embattled labor, have a great responsibility. The workers throughout the country, noting their stubborn struggle and remembering, many of them, the glory of the past, will turn again to Paterson for inspiration and perhaps for leadership in the difficult and complicated task of building unions and making them really serve the interests of the workers.

LOOK TO PATERSON

The silk workers, who stand today in the forefront of embattled labor, have a great responsibility. The workers throughout the country, noting their stubborn struggle and remembering, many of them, the glory of the past, will turn again to Paterson for inspiration and perhaps for leadership in the difficult and complicated task of building unions and making them really serve the interests of the workers.

The militants conducting the silk strike have shown how to make an A. F. of L. union function as an instrument of struggle. It is up to them also to demonstrate that affiliation to the United Textile Workers does not mean reconciliation with the reactionary philosophy and treacherous practices of the leadership of this organization.

If the silk strike has already attracted national attention, its continuance to a victory will invest its organizers with a national authority. The progressive forces in the labor movement, now scattered and demoralized, need a reorganization. This is the most imperative task of the hour.

Two American Congresses «Against War»

The "historic Anti-War Congress" has adjourned, and as was to be and was foreseen, it has left absolutely no positive residue, save a bitter taste in the mouth of every revolutionist, and illusions in the minds of those workers duped by the macabre masquerade of the Stalinists.

More than once in these columns we have submitted the whole Stalin-Barbusse (in the United States: Browder-Sinclair-Dreiser) movement to a thorough criticism which laid it bare as a burlesque of a genuine united front movement against Fascism and the danger of imperialist war, as a pernicious pacifist delusion calculated to cover up the impotence of the international Stalin apparatus.

The Stalinist Theory About War

The official Stalinist theory of national socialism leads directly to the conception that the struggle against imperialist war and for the defense of the Soviet Union, requires, or permits, policies and practices from those pursued in the general strategy of the proletarian vanguard. A revolutionary policy must be followed "in general" in the struggle of the British working class against the bourgeoisie and its labor lieutenants.

In essence, this course resulted

The New York Barbusse Movement and The «People's Council» of 1917

In the blowing up of the Second International when the crucial test confronted it. The International is an instrument of peace, and not of war, was the Kautskyan explanation in 1914. If there is any difference between that and the conduct of the Stalinists, it is that the latter half conceal themselves behind the thin mask of Messrs. Muenzenberg, Barbusse and their similars.

A Striking Comparison

The New York congress affords us the opportunity of making a most striking comparison between it and a similar movement in this country in 1917—the "People's Council of America for Democracy and Terms of Peace".

The "People's Council" was as much a cover organization for the Socialist party as the Barbusse movement is for the Stalinists. It too had as its aim the struggle against war and the preservation of peace. It too proclaimed itself a "friend of the Russian revolution" and demanded that the peace terms of the "Russian democracy" be universally accepted.

Among its founders and spokesmen could be found almost exactly

the same organizations, the same individuals—at all events, the same types—as those that composed the New York congress a few days ago. If the Barbusse movement has Mrs. Annie E. Gray of the Women's Peace Society, the 1917 movement had the equally well-intentioned Harriet Park Thomas, of the Women's Peace Party.

The "Peoples Council" was, as is quite well known today, a miscarriage. It organized no real movement against the war, nor could it. It even proclaimed that "We are not discouraging enlistments. We are not obstructing the conduct of the war".

The Communist party does, it is refused to be aligned with this splitting national strike committee. And when the membership had discovered that the National Union people had jammed through a motion to send five delegates to Allentown they immediately rescinded the motion and voted to withdraw the delegates.

A Superficial Distinction

Ah, but you forget that it was the social patriotic Socialist party that inspired and maneuvered the People's Council; whereas now it is the revolutionary Communist party that is behind the Barbusse movement.

Historic Strike of 20 Years Ago

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The strikers gave a lesson in proletarian unity to the whole country. Beginning with the Henry Doherty mill the strike spread like wildfire embracing all the silk slaves of Paterson who left their looms in open revolt against the introduction of the 3 and 4 loom system and for the eight hour day.

At the helm of the strike stood the heroic I. W. W., fanning the discontent, inspiring the faltering, guiding the militants, braving the terror, teaching the rudiments of the class struggle to countless thousands and writing a page of labor history in letters of red.

Thousands of strikers, men and women, thronged the picket line in the grey hours of the morning where the police beat them mercilessly. Hundreds were taken to Black Marlin to filthy jails. But they were not swerved from their goal.

Several workers were shot and killed by hired assassins during the strike. Phillip Russell wrote in the August 1913 International Socialist Review of an incident that typifies the magnificent spirit that animated the workers in the strike.

"By her husband's open grave Madonna's wife turned and faced the throng. In broken halting English she began to speak. 'I do not cry,' she said. 'Madonna is dead, but still I cannot cry. They have killed my man, but I shed not one tear. After you win the strike, they may let me cry. I do not ask help from you, though my man is dead. I ask only that you win the strike.'"

Is it any wonder that the memory of this strike has survived for more than 20 years?

The local press raised the red scare. The bosses were quite ready to deal with a "sable" union. They brought the J. T. W. and its misleaders Sara Conboy and John Golden, to Paterson, made a private agreement with them behind the backs of the workers and then hired the army, guarded it with policemen, firemen with hoses ready to cool off the workers and an army of thugs, and proposed to sell the betrayal to the workers. But the strikers would have none of it. They stormed out of the meet-

ing stronger for the I. W. W. than ever.

This did not convince the bosses yet. So they tried shop conferences with the workers and secret ballots but the strikers would not be intimidated back to work. The authorities arrested Haywood and the other strike leaders several times on all sorts of trumped-up charges, but to no avail.

"Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was on the platform at a big strike meeting one day explaining the significance of the red flag when a striking dyer sprang up from the middle of the audience crying: 'I know! Here is the red flag.'"

"And aloft he held his right hand—stained a permanent bloody crimson, guarded from years of toil, and corroded by the scarlet dye which it was his business to put into the fabrics worn by the dainty lady as well as the fawning prostitute.

"For an instant there was silence and then the hall was rent by cries from the husky throats as all realized this humble dyer indeed knew the meaning of the red badge of his class."

Good reason that the strikers held out, grimly determined, for almost five months, their children sent to New York to sympathetic workers, and their own stomachs empty. Take as an instance the great parent in Madison Square Garden the like of which has never been seen before or since, in which 1,029 strikers gave a graphic portrayal of their great battle before a crowded house. This thrilling, unforgettable spectacle before a packed house was just one of the ways the I. W. W. dramatized the strike and rallied the support of labor to it.

All of the grandiose efforts of the bosses and their local agents were frustrated by the strikers and their leadership. Here is a clipping of the rabid Paterson Star of the time which relates the failure of one of these incidents:

"With flags flying and the city decked out in gala garb, the great silk mills of Paterson reopened their doors to welcome back 35,000 men and women operatives.

"The ending of the gigantic labor war was beautifully planned. The factory owners were going to forgive their erring workmen. Mayor McBride and the police saw the end of their troubles approaching. The ministers who had urged the workers to return understood their exhortations were to be obeyed.

"It was a very successful end of the strike, marred by only one thing—none of the strikers went back."

No, it was not any stunt of the work. It was economic pressure—bosses that forced the men back to sheer hunger—that began to toll after 22 weeks of strike. The strike was lost.

Because of its cost, because of the travail, the sacrifices, the heroic militancy, the Paterson strike of 1913 has gone down into the annals of labor never to be eradicated.

Independent Craft Unions in Strike

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unions, formed clubs of the warpers and the other trades, independent of any of the existing unions in the city.

What is most interesting, however, is the fact that the National Textile Workers Union, which is committed to a policy of industrial unionism, was instrumental in the organization of the United Warpers' League and the clubs of loomfixers and twisters. Members and sympathizers of the N. T. W. were the most active figures, the creators of these organizations.

So discredited had the National Union (Stalinist) become in the eyes of the workers that recruitment of experienced workers into it was wellnigh impossible. In other words, the National Union ceased to possess any vitality which would make growth possible. Instead of recognizing this fact as honest and progressive unionists, and sending these workers into the ranks of the Associated, the leaders of the N. T. W., hoping later—should better times come—to corral the skilled crafts into their paper union, followed the traditional A. F. of L. policy of separating the skilled workers from the broad mass.

But if the N. T. W. could not organize the workers directly into their own union neither could they hold them under their influence. For more than five weeks now the National Union, which has sympathizers on the Executive Board of the United Warpers League, have been exerting every effort to get the latter organization to send representatives to the national strike committee run by the N. T. W. Except for one incident of recent date, where the full membership was not present, the warpers have every time overwhelmingly

Lecture By DIEGO RIVERA

"REVOLUTIONARY ART" at the Greek Workers Club "Protomagia" 530-9th Ave., bet. 42nd & 43rd Sts. on SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, at 8 P. M. ADMISSION FREE

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true, adopt revolutionary theses on how to fight the war danger; it speaks and writes incessantly of the transformation of imperialist war into civil war, of the struggle against pacifism, and more of the same.

But—and this is the nub of the question—the Socialist party of 1917, in its own conventions and press, also paid formal homage to the revolutionary phrase. At its St. Louis emergency convention in 1917, it declared (majority resolution on war): "We particularly warn the workers against the snare and delusion of defensive warfare. As against the false doctrine of national patriotism we uphold the ideal of international working class solidarity... The acute situation created by war calls for an even more vigorous prosecution of the class struggle, and we recommend to the workers and pledge ourselves to the following course of action: 1. Continuous active and public opposition to the war, through demonstrations, mass petitions and all other means within our power."

Radical enough, wasn't it? Among its signatories were not only the revolutionist Ithuenberg, but also the Centrist Hillquit and the social imperialist Berger. So much for their words. In action however, the St. Louis resolution did not prevent Hillquit and Berger from dissolving the Socialist party and its anti-war work in the wisly-washty pacifist morass of the People's Council, which served American imperialism so well in its own way, while the war was actually on. —MAX SHACHTMAN. (To be continued)

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Independent Craft Unions in Strike

refused to be aligned with this splitting national strike committee. And when the membership had discovered that the National Union people had jammed through a motion to send five delegates to Allentown they immediately rescinded the motion and voted to withdraw the delegates.

From the beginning of the strike the warpers have made overtures to the Associated towards obtaining representatives on the strike committee of the latter organization. This move was consummated within the last few days, and the United Warpers have elected two militant workers to the Associated strike committee where they were well-received.

In the course of the earlier attempts for a common strike committee one of the conditions put by the Associated, before this could take place, was for the United Warpers League to come to some agreement with the A. F. of L. Horizontal Warpers League. In characteristic A. F. of L. style the latter refused to come to any kind of an agreement until the United Warpers League would liquidate and its members join their union as individuals. This was refused by the membership. And for several weeks the negotiations dragged along until the rank and file of the Associated Strike Committee voted to send a letter to the Warpers League inviting the warpers to elect two delegates to the strike committee on the single condition that the elected delegates be subject to the approval of the Associated strike committee.

Eli Keller, under instructions to send the said letter, composed it in such bureaucratic fashion that the warpers rejected it. Then a delegation of the Associated strike committee, incensed at Keller's action, came to the warpers and asked that the old letter be returned and read a new invitation which was unanimously accepted by the membership.

Before the warpers lies the big job of completely organizing the craft, of amalgamating with the loomfixers and the twisters, who are already represented on the Associated strike committee, and of laying the ground for the end of separate craft unionism in Paterson by ultimately affiliating with the American Federation of Silk Workers.

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