

Situation in Hotels and Restaurants

Along among the three trade unions in the food industry in and around New York, the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Branch of the Amalgamated Food Workers is carrying on a vigorous and successful organization drive among the hotel and restaurant workers. This drive is the response to years of effort on the part of the hotel and restaurant owners to lower the conditions of the workers, cutting wages, lengthening hours and speeding-up the work, culminating in their present attempt to stabilize conditions on their lowest level by means of a code under the NRA. At the same time, although much of the work is highly skilled, they want to reduce it to "domestic" labor.

The economic background of the bosses' campaign is, first, the concentration of capital in this industry and second, the excessive investment of capital during the boom times which has lowered the level of profits and induced the bosses to try to put additional pressure on the workers in order to raise profits in spite of this.

The hotel industry itself ranks as the seventh largest in the United States, with a capital investment of over five billion dollars. Altogether there are over 26,800 hotels in the United States, but about half of them are small (less than 25 rooms) or are operated only seasonally.

Investments and Wages

The following data, taken from the 1929 report of the U. S. Census Bureau, show the high concentration of capital, the large number of workers per establishment, and the low average wage level. Comparing New York City with the country as a whole, the average size of the establishment is still larger, and the wage level takes insufficient account of the higher cost of living in New York compared with the rest of the country. These figures refer only to hotels of 25 rooms or more which are operated all year round:

Number of hotels	13,328	509
Number of rooms	1,134,957	126,632
Average rooms per hotel	85	249
Total employees	921,259	41,386
Total wages and salaries	\$257,034,000	\$44,085,000
Dining, lunch, room and kitchen employees	100,140	13,386
Wages and salaries	\$84,428,000	\$12,911,000
Average annual wages for such workers	\$844	\$985
All other workers	191,119	28,795
Wages and salaries for all other workers	\$172,606,000	\$31,174,000
Average annual wages for all other workers	\$904	\$1,081

The average investment per hotel in the United States may be estimated at about \$250,000. From the foregoing it appears that there are 22 workers in the average hotel in the United States, and about 33 in New York City. But the concentration of capital has gone much further than these figures show. In a single one of the largest hotels in New York, over 3,000 workers are employed; in the kitchen alone, over a hundred. "Chain-store" operation of hotels now embraces a total of 80,000 rooms, and is growing rapidly.

"War Chest" to Fight Unions

The concentrated power represented by the Amalgamated Hotel Men's Association, the bosses' trade organization, is indicated further by the generally accepted fact that they have raised a "war chest" of \$600,000 for the specific purpose of fighting the workers' efforts at organization for better conditions.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the A. F. of L., which always tried to avoid open conflict with large and concentrated aggregates of capital, has done very little in this field, and particularly among the key workers in the hotel and restaurant industry, the cooks and the kitchen department in general.

As a profit-making machine, the hotel industry is suffering not only from the crisis in general, but specifically from the consequences of its own folly in engaging in a boom of overbuilding and overexpansion. This has resulted in a hyperburdening and the carrying of a overburden of interest, amortization and taxes. Now that the consequences of this orgy of overexpansion have shown themselves in lower profits, they are attempting to raise profits at the expense of the workers. Yet the conditions of the work, the seasoned character, and the amount of training and ability required are such, that the worker in this industry is entitled to a relatively higher wage scale—if he can get it through organization in a powerful and militant trade union.

Overbuilding in the Hotel Industry

As to the fact that the bosses had sufficient warning, even before the boom burst, that they were overbuilding, there is sufficient evidence. Between 1920 and 1928, a full year before the general crisis struck the country, the overbuilding which had already taken place resulted in the following situation:

Number of rooms	1,070,000	1,521,000
Per cent occup.	85.5%	67.6
Number of rooms occupied	914,850	1,028,196
Number of guests	1,097,820	1,237,835

While the number of rooms available increased 50%, the number of

Conditions of Workers in Large N.Y. Industry

rooms actually occupied increased less than 13%, and the number of guests by about the same percentage. As a result, the percentage of occupancy declined to 67.6%, while throughout the trade it is understood that 70% occupancy is the minimum at which a hotel can operate and make money.

Hotel Failures During Boom

While the building boom was going on, another warning signal was given by the steadily mounting totals of hotel failures, as shown by the following figures:

Year	Number of Failures	Liabilities in \$25,000
1921	59	\$6,625,000
1922	70	2,234,000
1923	82	7,129,000
1924	64	3,183,000
1925	82	3,323,000
1926	82	5,506,000
1927	112	10,982,000
1928	123	13,164,000

All this was taking place supposedly in a period of prosperity. So obvious had the danger become that W. I. Hamilton, manager of the Florida Associated Hotels, in a book on "Promoting New Hotels", written in October 1929, that is, at the height of the boom psychology of the "new era", warns the industry, "Since 1926 the spread between the number of hotel rooms and the number of guests has been steadily widening. While both have been increasing, the increase in rooms has been the more rapid. The hotel industry... of late has grown too rapidly."

Yet money continued to pour into the industry, seeking investment in an already overcrowded field. Such structures as the Hotel New Yorker and the new Waldorf-Astoria were opened long after the crash in general business had come.

Making the Workers Pay

How did the bosses meet this situation? By cutting wages, lengthening hours, and speeding-up the work. According to the U. S. Department of Labor, the following situation prevailed in August 1933, compared with the last previous rates of wages and hours:

Wages Rates Per Week	
Union	Present
Union I: Waitresses	\$15 \$20
Union II: Waiters	15 20
Union III: Waiters	35-50 30-45
Hours per Week	
Union	Present
Union I:	9 a day
Union II:	54 a week 48 a week
Union III:	9-10 a day 12-16

In the case of Union II, we see how conditions have deteriorated in the industry, wages being cut 25% while hours were increased 12-12 percent.

Discussion Articles

Problems of the Cuban Revolution

In the face of the monstrous odds, the workers of Cuba today must assume their historical task. They, and they alone, can achieve the liberation of Cuba. Only the workers can set up an efficient form of government in Cuba, defeat the intervention of American imperialism, and solve the disastrous contradictions that have plunged and kept the Cuban masses in degradation. Successful American intervention will mean a disastrous defeat for the Cuban proletariat. The tragedy of the Cuban proletariat must be prevented!

The Cuban masses are militant. Seizures of plantations have already occurred. Embryonic revolutionary Soviets are in the process of formation. But unless the movement is led into the proper channels, the Soviets will become only a parody; American imperialism will restore its rapacious hegemony.

Revolutionary Party Needed

The Cuban workers cannot succeed unless a genuine revolutionary party is immediately formed, and takes the initiative; unless the international revolutionary proletariat, particularly of Latin America, the United States and Canada is mobilized in defense of the Cuban revolution. The criminal policies of Stalinism, the collapse of the Comintern have left the Cuban workers without their most necessary, essential and important weapons of struggle; they have no revolutionary party to lead them in battle; under the leadership of Stalin the international proletariat cannot come to their support. These weapons can and must be forged. In Cuba, the Left Oppositionists must immediately call for the formation of a true Communist party. Internationally, the Left Opposition must inaugurate a united front in defense of the Cuban workers.

Time is precious now. Every day is equal to a decade. In the very heat of the struggle, the proletariat of Cuba can and must gain the time necessary to consolidate its ranks, and form its vanguard. Upon its success or failure rests the

Data accumulated by the writer in the course of his work in his own union show that a group of skilled cooks was making an average of \$40.88 a week when they took their present jobs; now they are averaging \$30.04 a week.

In the meantime, staffs have been reduced, hours have become longer, the amount of work to be done or supervised has become greater. In one of the big hotel kitchens, 140 men were employed two years ago; now there are six.

The bosses themselves are fully aware of the connection that exists between the overcapitalization of the industry and the wage-cutting, longer hours and speed-up by which they hope to increase profits.

In the Bankers Magazine for August 1932, the following figures are given, as to division of expenses for each dollar of gross sales:

	Cents
Bondholders' interest	12
Taxes and insurance	6
Depreciation	9
Payroll	31
Merchandise (food, etc.)	19
Sundries, supplies, etc.	23
Total	\$1.00

The conclusion which this paper draws from these facts for the benefit of the capitalists is, "If a saving great enough to protect the bondholders' interests, endangered by decreased sales, is to be effected, it must necessarily come out of the last three items through more efficient operation."

"This so-called 'more efficient operation' means, first and foremost, wage-cuts. This is amply proven by an article in the same issue of the Bankers Magazine by Ralph Hitz, president of the National Hotel Management chain, which operates a total of 4500 rooms in New York, Cleveland and Detroit. He is trying to prove to the bankers that his chain methods are better for cutting wages than the individual managements, and cites the following facts:

In June 1932, under chain management, 25 cents out of each dollar of sales was kept for gross profit; in the same month of the previous year, under the old management, only 15% had been kept for gross profit.

How was this result obtained? He explains: In June 1931, under the old management, out of each dollar of room sales 27% had been paid out in wages; in June 1932 this had been cut down to 16%. In this food department, in June 1931 (out of each dollar of food sales, 52 cents had been paid out in wages; in June 1932, only 33 cents was being paid out in wages.

Juggling the Profit Figures

On top of this, the bosses are deliberately making a poorer showing of profit than they need to, in order to have a further excuse for wage-cutting. In the alleged costs of doing business, tabulated above, we notice that depreciation amounts to 9% of the total. This means that 9% of the gross intake of the business has to go to replace the wearing-out of the building each

year. If 9% of the value of the building were to wear out each year, the whole building would last 11 years. This is ridiculous, since we know that a hotel property can stand forty years or more, in spite of changes in public taste and in location values, and still retain its value.

Another item which is used to pad the accounts is the cost of financing, which may run as high as 5% of the value of the property. On a hotel costing 5 million dollars, say a thousand-room hotel in a larger city, this charge might be \$250,000. If all this is loaded on to the expense account in one year or a few years, the profits will be that much lesser, and the management has a better excuse for cutting wages than if it spread such charges over the life of the mortgages at least.

Demands On Hotel Workers

Against these pretensions of the bosses, the workers in this industry can present indisputable facts to show how much is demanded of them as workers. A survey made by the writer among members of the union shows that the average first-class cook, capable of taking charge of the kitchen of a first-class hotel or restaurant, has had to train himself for his work for some eighteen years, going through the various stages of his training as follows:

Apprentice	2 years
Commis (from sixth to first)	6 years
First Commis	2 years
Chef de partie, working chef, sous-chef, chef	8 years

As apprentice he earns either nothing or a nominal sum; besides, the apprenticeship is usually served on the Continent, particularly in France, as the American hotels in the European sense of all-around training from the bottom up, but begin specialization in the various departments as soon as a worker enters the trade. As the worker acquires experience, he becomes responsible for the management of part of all of the kitchen staff and for the expenditure of thousands of dollars of food and supplies. If a waiter, he is directly and personally responsible for the handling of checks.

Moreover, the work is definitely of a seasonal character. Even in a boom year like 1929, the difference in employment between the highest and the lowest months of the year was 7.2%, compared with 0.89 per cent for industry as a whole, or seasonal fluctuations eight times as wide as in general industry.

The Bosses' Codes and the Workers' Code

In the face of this, the bosses proposed one of the worst codes ever to be presented under the NRA: a 54-hour week, a minimum wage of 28 cents an hour which could be reduced in many cases to 20 cents an hour, a "merit clause" which gave the boss unlimited right to hire and fire, and an amazing collection of tricky provisions which would have served to stabilize the workers' conditions at intolerably low levels.

The code proposed by the A. F. W. calls for a 40-hour week, a minimum of \$15 a week, no split shifts, decent wages for the higher-paid workers, abolition of the spy system, and a workers' committee to propose increases in wages scales where made necessary by rising costs of living.

When it became clear that both the imperialist and Chinese authorities, notwithstanding Lord Marley's presence, viewed the delegates' activities as being in some way connected with the Communist movement, moves were made to remove this "prejudice." Lord Marley categorically denied in the press "that the United Front Anti-War Congress scheduled to be held in Shanghai is called under the auspices of the Third International", although, he added, Communist representation would be welcomed.

Next, he called on Mayor Wu Tchen in order to break down that gentleman's prejudices. He assured Mayor Wu that "as long as he is the president of the congress there shall be no possibility of the congress being exploited by the Communists as a jumping-over plank for their own purposes."

Prejudices of Imperialist Agents

The British delegate Gerald Hamilton, paid a visit to Nanking to remove some of the "prejudices" of Stalin's old friend, Wang Ching-Wei, whose "Leftism" last year finally precipitated him into the arms of Chiang Kai-Shek, where he remains. Hamilton was politely informed by Wang's secretary that he could have an interview provided he did not speak about the projected congress. Hence there was no interview. Elementary political wisdom dictated the fullest exploitation of Wang's refusal to discuss the congress for an exposure of the Kuo Min Tang government's role as aide-de-camp to the imperialist war makers. But instead, Mr. Hamilton, with truly statesmanlike adroitness, blindly told the press that he was "highly satisfied with the results of his visit." Which is not surprising since the delegation and its precious congress is "non-political," that is, not of any party, and therefore hardly capable of displaying any political wisdom.

Some shrewd comments on the projected congress and the delegation sent to organize it have appeared in the imperialist press of Shanghai. The North-China Daily News, while considering the congress has "great potentialities for mischief," declares: "In spite of the distinguished figures in literature and art who, for some inscrutable reason, seem to have blindly given their precious organization their countenance, it is necessary to place on record the view that it is entirely unrepresentative and of no real weight. Is it unreasonable to maintain that an organization which its chief sponsor here cannot be more specific in describing has but slender claim to the hospitality of a world-city like Shanghai?"

Exactly! Lord Marley and his associates represent nothing but non-descript and unrepresentative "anti-war committees" in the countries from which they come. The imperialist organ quoted finds them un-

representative chiefly because they have no "official backing," unless from Moscow. But our charge is based on the fact that they represent not a single organization that is rooted in the proletarian masses.

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These scornful words might well be taken to heart by the Chinese Communists. But it is a sad commentary on the current state of affairs in the International that Communists must seek even the columns of the bourgeois press in the words of the bourgeois companions. Lord Marley and his companions have now been in Shanghai three weeks and have accomplished just nothing, unless what is recorded above can be deemed accomplishment. A date for the projected congress is still not fixed. It is doubtful, indeed, whether it will take place at all. The British, French and Chinese authorities have already made it clear that they will not permit the congress to be held in their respective jurisdictions, and it is expected that when formal applications are submitted they will be refused. There was no preparation for the congress, either political or organizational, prior to the delegation's arrival in Shanghai. There has been very little since, and that only of very dubious value.

Lord Marley and company are comfortably ensconced in their hotels, waiting for things to happen. They have announced that they will stay there six months if necessary in order to get a congress together. But all the blarney of Stalinist trumpets will be unable to give the congress—if, indeed, it is ever able to meet—that purpose of its unrepresentative character and the failure to carry out any serious preparatory work, it must be deprived. Shanghai, Sept. 8, 1933.

League Activities

New Castle Meeting

New Castle, Pennsylvania.—About seventy-five workers heard comrade Swaback speak here on the live issues confronting the working class at home, abroad, and internationally, as the result of the NRA and the international situation created by Germany, calling for the creation of a new revolutionary international. Since this audience came through a driving downpour of rain which commenced just before the meeting started and kept up a steady bombardment till almost midnight, we had a group of listeners deeply interested in these questions. In the audience were many militants of years standing in the labor movement and young workers and students of diverging views. The meeting was held in the Socialist Hall, in an atmosphere of concentrated attention.

In the discussion period questions were asked about the Five Year Plan, the Soviet Union and its defense, Germany, and the N. R. A. Quite interesting were the remarks of a well-known and outstanding personality who had been the main instrument of the Application of the Stalinist "General Line" as the leading comrade of the Communist Party here. He complimented the local branch of the Left Opposition, saying that the Communist Party no longer existed and that he was no longer a member of it.

Our meeting adjourned after which a group gathered about comrade Swaback for further discussion. A substantial collection had been evoked in the audience. Everyone looks forward to more meetings, like this, which was thoroughly enjoyed in spite of unfavorable weather.

Swaback at Cleveland

Cleveland.—Comrade Arne Swaback spent two days in Cleveland—the 19th and 20th of October. The 18th we had a private meeting and October 20th a lecture at the City Club Auditorium on the theme: "Hitlerism, a Menace to the Workers of the World." An audience of 200 heard him speak and we sold militants and pamphlets. There were some Stalinists and asked questions whereby they exposed their ignorance. And, by the way, I know them to be the cream of the C. P. which preys the cultural level of party cadres. No wonder! Reading outside of the Daily Worker and the pocket editions of Stalin literature is strictly prohibited.

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P. S.—At the Barbusse Bureaus we distribute leaflets. The Stalinists could not stand, so they organized a number of gangsters who started to grab the leaflets and tear them. Comrade Bryar resisted. He was beaten, and workers—came to his rescue. Barbusse came of 1800 had less workers than the Swaback audience of 200.

The Anti-War Junket in Shanghai

(Continued From Last Issue)

The day after their arrival the delegates issued a statement:

"The delegation thanks the English and French press of Shanghai for the interest shown in their mission to the Far East... The French government has never placed any obstacles in the way of the United Front Anti-War Committee, and meetings have lately been held in Paris in crowded halls such as the Salle Lullier in the presence of many thousand enthusiastic supporters and sympathizers... All the more unfortunate and incongruous is the attitude of the present Chinese government which, according to the English press, has forbidden in China newspapers... This ukase, if really issued, must have been decided on after the receipt of false information about the delegation's intentions, which are not today, and never have been, other than the furtherance of China's national independence and liberty."

The British and French imperialist press of Shanghai is thanked by the delegation, including the Communist Vallant-Couturier, for its "interest," which, by the way, has manifested itself in attempts to persuade both the imperialist and Chinese authorities not to allow the congress to be held. Pained surprise is expressed that the Chinese government should have clamped down a censorship on the delegation's doings "which are not today, and never have been, other than the furtherance of China's national independence and liberty." Surely the editor of L'Humanite should know that the government at Nanking is engaged in selling liberty to the imperialists, with a view to securing the latter's aid in keeping the Chinese masses in subjection. Or does he perhaps believe that a little factory administered in the best Stalinist fashion, may induce Nanking to smile benignly on the congress project?

Futile Mission to Japan

Lord Marley and Dr. Marteau went to Japan to try and scratch up a Japanese delegation. They were not permitted ashore for the purpose and had to take the next boat back to Shanghai, their mission unaccomplished. Lord Marley's next step was to address a meeting of the Shanghai Rotary Club, at which, before big business men, Chinese and foreign, he expounded his opposition to war with a view (in his own words) to dispelling the "prejudice" that exists against the congress. The anti-party of big business to the war movement is—prejudice! Apart from his pacifist remarks Lord Marley told the Rotarians that "in Russia good government depends on constructive criticism of the government by the people. This self-criticism is freely expressed in both public and private, and is encouraged as an essential part of government by the people." The hard-working Tass correspondent doubtless made this statement available to Moscow by wire, for use in the work of "answering" the Left Opposition. Even a Lord Marley has his uses.

When it became clear that both the imperialist and Chinese authorities, notwithstanding Lord Marley's presence, viewed the delegates' activities as being in some way connected with the Communist movement, moves were made to remove this "prejudice." Lord Marley categorically denied in the press "that the United Front Anti-War Congress scheduled to be held in Shanghai is called under the auspices of the Third International", although, he added, Communist representation would be welcomed.

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LEAGUE ACTIVITIES

Swaback Tour Itinerary

Other meetings on comrade Swaback's tour are as follows:

Thurs., Nov. 2nd...Minneapolis
Fri., Nov. 3rd...Minneapolis
Sat., Nov. 4th...Minneapolis
Sun., Nov. 5th...Minneapolis
Tues., Nov. 7th...Chicago, Ill.
Thurs., Nov. 9th...Davenport, Ia.
Fri., Nov. 10th...Davenport, Ia.

Militant Builders

In the last week alone we got almost as many new subs as in the entire drive up to that point. As reported in last week's issue the total in the sub drive had reached 46 subs. Last week alone 34 subs came in. That gives us a total of 80 to date with the drive still gaining in momentum.

An Encouraging Sign

Featuring of this drive, one we encountered rarely in previous drives, is the number of comrades who are sending in more than one sub at a time. In the past week seven came in from a comrade in Toronto, eight from Youngstown, two each from a number of other comrades.

The Standing

S. Jourard Toronto 7
V. R. Dunne Minneapolis 5
M. Abern Bronx 4
C. Hedlund Minneapolis 4
S. Hurdy Philadelphia 4
J. Carter Brooklyn 3
J. Fruitman Toronto 3
C. Schecht Boston 3
L. Goodman Philadelphia 2
F. Eckelberger New Castle 2
M. Kent Brooklyn 2
H. Capelis Manhattan 2
N. Saitir Chicago 2
E. Winer Boston 2
S. Barach Boston 2
G. Cooper Brooklyn 2
L. Roberts Philadelphia 2

A number of comrades sent in single subs. They are too numerous to mention. But we are keeping an accurate record and if these comrades send in additional subs we will be able to list them in this column.

The Youngstown Branch

A note of explanation is due about the Youngstown Branch. When we began to report the drive we listed M. K. from Youngstown. The Youngstown branch informed us that they wanted all subs credited