

# Nation-Wide Strike of 500,000 Bituminous Coal Miners Looms in April

## Short Sweet and Victorious Under Rank and File Control

### Danger of Separate Agreements by Leaders

By GERRY ALLARD

Unless leaders of the existing miners' unions succeed in stifling the rank and file through means of separate local agreements, there will be a national walkout of some 500,000 bituminous coal diggers beginning April 1. of this year.

It is unlikely that a compromise will be effected suitable to the mine workers by the time current wage agreements expire. Turmoil in the hard coal region, Illinois, the Southwest, Washington and Nova Scotia is teaching John L. Lewis, International president of the United Mine Workers of America, a few lessons.

The rank and file are again cracking down on their leaders and from Washington, D. C. Lewis has been making statements that appear "progressive". The dictator of the largest union in the soft coal industry is bellyaching for action on the part of the solons on the Black-Connery 30-hour week and the Guffey-Snyder coal stabilization bills. The favorable enactment of these bills by Congress would save Lewis a great deal of embarrassment. It would enable him to consummate wage agreements with the national coal operators association with a minimum of friction.

Never before have the bituminous coal miners of this country been in a better position to strike. What is more, they can make the strike so effective that it will prove to be short, sweet and victorious. That is, of course, providing the rank and file can exercise control over the strike situation.

For the first time in 30 years, the bituminous coal miners' wage agreements expire simultaneously. With the wrecking of the central competitive field through Lewis' treachery in 1927-28, states and parts of states were signed separately, thus enabling one district to be pitted against another, much to the profit of the coal operators.

Now, however, the miners, through the peculiar contradictions of the NRA, are so organized that any attempt to split them will be the signal for wide-spread action, both externally and internally.

**Dual Movements**

Some readers will perhaps point to the dual unions in several states as a hindrance to real success. This situation does contain an element of danger. But, it is precisely this situation which is causing Lewis to step a little livelier than he has in the past. If he is to hold his army he will have to produce the goods. If he doesn't, the dual movements, and new revolts from within the U.M.W.A. will inevitably amalgamate their forces.

Prior to the NRA, Lewis' organization was practically reduced to a paper union. The complete servility of the U.M.W.A. leaders to the coal operators had almost destroyed, by pressure from within and without, the last semblance of solid union organization in the bituminous coal industry. Along came the NRA and Lewis wasted no time. Approximately 350,000 new members were thrown into his lap. The Appalachian region is solidly organized. With the exception of spots as in Alabama, parts of Kentucky and the coke region of Pennsylvania, the U.M.W.A. and various independent unions have the miners pretty well under control.

**Demands**

The outstanding demands of the miners are the six-hour day, 5-day

week and substantial wage increases.

The 7-hour day, product of pressure of the miners in the Appalachian region under the NRA, has robbed the coal operators of some powerful arguments. Heretofore, coal operators argued that the shorter work day would destroy the coal industry due to the competitive threat of oil and gas. Class collaborating trade union leaders and conservative coal miners were lulled to sleep by this argument. However, the 7-hour day has proven to be both feasible and practicable. Coal operators have maintained their usual production, in some cases increased it, and what is more, the coal operators have been making larger profits.

**All Males Under 30 in CCC Plan of N.Y. Relief Bureau**

Second Letter From A Relief Investigator

The Home Relief Bureau is a tremendously important institution in the life of New York City. It thrives and prospers. Every month larger and larger sums are allocated to it. However, it is one industry which the capitalists would like to curtail. They look favorably upon all schemes to contract its field of endeavor—from Conservation Camps to detectives masquerading as social workers.

The Home Relief Bureau is a scant three years old. But it is already a giant. Today it has on its rolls over 200,000 families and 22,000 single men. Almost one seventh of the population of the city depend upon it for subsistence.

Besides those on relief, there are another 100,000 families, one of whose members, in order to take the family off relief, has been given a relief job. At least another 100,000 have been on relief during the last three years. It is safe to say that the lives of two million people in New York City alone have been directly affected by the Bureau.

The Home Relief Bureau is the capitalist answer to the needs of the unemployed. In 1930 there was a tremendous demonstration of the unemployed. Towards the end of 1931 it was clear that private charity could no longer handle the situation; it was prepared to care for the "individually maladjusted" but not for mass maladjustment. The relief given was intended to take off the edge of discontent. It was and is a miserable sop.

**Some Facts**

It is necessary to point out what a wretched sop it really is. For many people, unacquainted with the details, actually believe that in New York City relief is adequate.

Families of five have come to the Bureau expecting that their \$28 a month rent would be paid. They were surprised to find that they would be allowed \$17.50 per month if they proved they were destitute.

For food the actual allowance is \$3.30 every two weeks per man, \$3.10 for a woman, \$2.40 for a child under 16, \$2 for a child under 6, with a 50 percent increase for one person, 25 percent for two, 15 percent for three, then the straight budget until a family of eight is reached, when there is a 5 percent reduction, etc.

Obviously this is a starvation al-

### Separate Agreements

In the beginning of this article I pointed to the only condition which prevents an effective national walkout in 24 states where bituminous coal is mined. Separate agreements are nothing new. It was an effective tactic in the days when the coal industry was a young, booming industry. The industry was decentralized and the market was usually favorable. By permitting one coal operator to recognize the union and concede favorable wage increases, this tactic almost ruined stubborn operators. It served the purpose of entrenching a rising labor union.

Under present circumstances, the coal industry being one of the most decadent sections of capitalist economy with operators consolidated or associated the tactic of separate agreements has a reverse effect. It is on this bone that all present coal miners' unions might break their teeth, consequently defeating the miners at a most opportune time to advance their cause and interests.

### Left Wing Program for Silk; No More Skulking Cliques

By FELIX GIORDANO

In spite of the betrayal of the last strike by Gorman & Co., the American Federation of Silk Workers still maintains itself as a department of the United Textile Workers. The workers refuse to be again unorganized, and, in spite of the many weaknesses of their union, cling to it and try to make it what they would like it to be, a real fighting organization of textile workers.

The silk workers realize that they have a task to perform, a job to finish. Their demands have not been met by the bosses; the government Boards have gone the way of all government boards; their conditions have not improved. Instead, the average wage of silk workers hovers close to the "minimum" of \$13 for a week of 40 hours, and from the present condition of the industry, they face a period when the full week of 40 hours is going to be as rare as a snowstorm in July.

Conditions in the silk industry have not improved. They are, if anything worse than immediately before the strike. The union, as at present constituted, is unable to cope with the manufacturers, or else unable to keep on tolerating these conditions. They need the 30-hour week, and they demand it.

**The Task of the Left Wing**

It is evident, then, that the task of the Left wing is to consolidate all the militant elements in the union for the purpose of supplying leadership to the workers in the coming struggles. For it is only through such a left wing that the workers can achieve victory. It is only upon the left wing that they can rely when all else fails them. The Left wing must be the crystallization of the active union members in an intelligent body working within the union, shaping policies and fighting so that the bureaucracy in the union be forced to accept them and follow them.

**No Cliques**

The left wing, we repeat, must be the crystallization of all that is genuinely progressive and militant in the union. It can not work in the dark, in secret, but it must agitate the workers, make its program known, and win the confidence of the whole membership.

The silk workers have known too many cliques that never produced the still-to-be-wrought left wing. Cliques have formed havoc among the silk workers before, they must not be allowed to do so again. For it is only the reactionary elements who fear publicity that work in secret, "springing things on" the workers and "getting them across". Let the left wing differentiate itself from such elements, and do not follow their system and their tactics.

## Wages Lag Profits Soar Since 1849

**A.F. of L. Figures Condemn Own Policy as False At Best**

Workers need no figures to tell them that they are constantly producing more goods and more profits for every dollar they are paid—that their wage slavery is becoming more severe all the time. But figures published in the March issue of the American Federationist, the magazine of the A. F. of L., vividly illustrate the meaning of the speed-up in dollars and cents, in wages and profits.

Between 1849 and 1933, the value of manufactured products per dollar paid in wages increased from \$4.30 to \$5.99. A slight decrease, from \$6.06 in 1929 to \$5.99 in 1933, may be credited to the NRA; but recent reports, government figures themselves show clearly that when 1934 is checked, the workers will find that "efficiency" has re-established itself—and that efficiency is another word for increasing exploitation of workers.

The percentages are telling: In 1849, wages formed 23.2 percent of the total value of goods produced; in 1919, 16.9 percent; in 1933, 16.7 percent.

Stated in another form, as wages versus profits and overhead, the figures show that of value added by manufacture (minus cost of raw materials), in 1849, 51 per cent went for wages and 49 for overhead and profits; in 1919, the ratio was 42.2 percent to 57.8 percent; in 1919, 36.4 to 63.6; in 1933, 30.8 to 69.2. It is significant that even before 1929 and 1933, when the value produced per dollar of wages decreased slightly, the ratio of profits over wages continued upward.

**A Program for the Left Wing**

What then are the essentials of a left wing movement, and more specifically, what would be a minimum program for such a movement?

In the first place, it must not confine itself to a locality or to one branch of the industry. A local movement cannot achieve national success, and no success is effective unless it is national.

Secondly, it must not be a secret organization. It must, instead, agitate among the workers for the adoption of its program, and must therefore be known to the workers as an organized movement with a definite program, drawing in members on the basis of it.

It must, in the third place, fight for the union to adopt its program; it must convince the workers of the soundness of it and see to it that it is carried through. Such a program must include as goals:

- a) The 30-hour week.
- b) Establishment of a maximum machine load.
- c) Establishment of minimum wages on a graduated scale.
- d) Industrial organization of the union, as well as the spreading and strengthening of it.
- e) Autonomy of the American Federation of Silk Workers as a distinct Department of the U.T.W.
- f) Local autonomy in the assignment of organizers.
- g) Seniority right in the mills.

These points must be included in the minimum program. The workers have already in the majority of instances come to realize the necessity of securing these demands both internally and in their relations with the manufacturers; they are the first task of the national left wing movement.

**WHAT TO ATTEND**

(Party Branch notices will be published free of charge in this column. All such notices should be sent to "What to Attend" and must be in the office not later than Monday noon.)

Philadelphia, Pa.  
March 24, Sunday, 8 P.M.—V. F. Calverton, on "The Passing of the Gods". Auspices of Workers Educational Forum, Grand Fraternity Building, 1626 Arch Street.  
March 31, Sunday, 8 P.M.—A. J. Muste will speak on "Coming Struggles in Rubber, Auto and Steel Industries".  
Every Friday evening, 9:30 to 11 P.M.—Course on "Elements of Political Economy." Instructor: M. V. Stone. At International Workers School, 329 Pine Street (3rd floor).  
Every Friday 8 to 9:30 P.M.—"History of Labor Internationalism". Instructor: B. Morgenstern. International Workers School, 329 Pine Street.

**Curtain Drops on Work Relief Farce; Wages Will Drop Soon**

The curtain falls. The prima donna, in grinning Roosevelt, takes a bow, holding hands with the second lead, Russell, and the ingenue, Wagner. The farce is ended, amid loud applause from the industrial orchestra seats and boos from the labor gallery.

The farce that Roosevelt and the Senate have been playing these last few weeks, titled "The Work-Relief Bill, or the Road to Lower Wages", is played out. Roosevelt has made another hit. (But this time the gallery did boo; the prima donna's popularity is on the wane.)

No one except the most naive ever expected Senator McCarran's "prevailing wage" amendment to the \$4,800,000,000 work-relief bill to win. Roosevelt's "defeat" several weeks ago, when the McCarran amendment was added to the bill by a vote of 44-43, was part of the play. Since it was well-known that Roosevelt would veto the bill with this amendment, those Senators who wanted to sleep the President on the wrist had a safe way to do it. That the bill would finally pass with Roosevelt's "security wage"—which means \$50 a month—was clear all the time.

Senator Russell, with Roosevelt's approval, wrote the "compromise".

**BOSTON BRANCH ACTIVITIES**

George Novack of New York, chairman of the Provisional Organizing Committee of the Non-Partisan Labor Defense, will speak in Boston under the auspices of the local Sacramento Defense Committee, on Friday, March 29, at Gilbert 15 II, Tremont Temple. Novack's subject will be "Labor's Fight Against Terrorism", and he will cover the Sacramento, Fargo and Arkansas situations.

## TO ALL BRANCHES AND PROSPECTIVE ADVERTISERS

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Auspices: Spartacus Youth League, 2 W. 15th St., N.Y.C. Proceeds for National Tour Meet at Pelham Bay Station (downstairs) at 11 A.M.

**V. F. Calverton**

in a series of lectures on "AMERICAN DEMAGOGUES" Tuesdays, at 9 P.M. at The Vagabonds Sheridan Square, N. Y. C. 88 South Seventh Avenue 7th Av. Suby. to Sheridan Sq. Dancing and Refreshments Admission 40 cents

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**J. P. SWAPS ART FOR PROFITS IN JAPAN**

NEW YORK (FP).—J. P. Morgan is selling his art treasures to place his money in Japanese investments—where interest rates are high.

That's the story going the rounds in exclusive society groups in New York City, says the society column of Hearst's Daily Mirror.

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