

Fargo — A Labor Struggle That Rocked the Northwest

Since the following article was written, several new developments have taken place. The sixteen defendants have at last been released on bail after the most fantastic obstructionist tactics on the part of Judge Paulson. An investigation committee from the N. D. State Legislature surprised no one by bringing in a report unfavorable to the Union. The special strike bulletin has been succeeded by a new tabloid weekly, the Gate City Labor Review, official organ of Local 173. A Fargo Defense movement has been initiated in Minneapolis along non-partisan lines under the guidance of mighty Local 574, and has already succeeded in mobilizing public opinion for the Fargo strikers—and what is more important, has raised some cash to finance the appeal which the union defendants will make to the State supreme court.

To understand what is going on today in Fargo, it is necessary to paint in a sketchy background.

Since the I.W.O. days the labor movement in Fargo has been dormant. But the strikes of General Drivers Local 574, Minneapolis, had their repercussions in this city. In September 1934 Miles Dunne of the Minneapolis union was loaned to General Drivers Local 173, Fargo, to act as business agent at the latter's request.

Immediately things began to hum.

On November 3 a milk strike was called for Fargo and Moorhead. A day of hard picketing ensued, followed by a ten-day truce. Local 173 came out of the strike victorious, with a settlement setting forth a minimum wage of twenty dollars weekly plus commissions, an agreement for collective bargaining, seniority rights and no discrimination. The union switched its energies toward organizing the coal and transfer workers. Inside of a few months, the workers in these industries had signed up almost 100 per cent. The union approached the employers and asked for a contract. This was coldly refused, and on January 22 the Fargo coal and transfer drivers went out on strike. The union laid down three principal demands: union recognition, no discrimination, and a uniform scale of wages.

Vigilante Trouble-Shooting

Following is a calendar of events since the strike was called. Early Sunday afternoon, January 27, a group of pickets went down to a nearby river to persuade an ice-cutting crew to come off the job. This was the signal for which the em-

ployers had been waiting. A siren was blowing, and three hundred deputized vigilantes, armed with clubs and ax handles, quickly assembled at the sheriff's office. Under the direction of States Attorney Bergeson, they were directed to the river. Approaching, they waved their clubs and yelled provokingly, "Why don't you — start something?" to the pickets. The vigilantes closed in and arrested 18 of the strikers. On 4th Street South were 14 more pickets walking towards the river. These were also arrested and carted off to jail, charged with "riot", an ancient charge dealing with "an act in the direction of a riot", which was taken out and dusted off for the occasion.

Tear Gas for Children

The body of special police then marched on the union hall, located on the second floor of a building on First Avenue. It was learned later that the owner of the building, a local business man, had taken out riot insurance the previous Friday. Inside the hall were a score of women and children, plus about 75 men. An FERA class in labor history was in progress, taught by a seventy-year old man, Mr. Aasgaard. Without warning, the hall was tear-gassed. This was accomplished by shooting aluminum bombs through the windows. A second bombardment was made and then "officers" formed a gauntlet from the hall entrance to the street. The prisoners were assembled as they came staggering from the stairs, eyes streaming from the effect of the gas. Several of the men from the hall were beaten by the vigilantes. Altogether, about 70 were arrested here, including three boys (one of them Towell Cruden, son of the Union's president), marshalled into line and marched to jail. This last batch was charged with "obstructing an officer". The books and records of the union together with the office furniture were seized by the vigilantes and turned over to Bergeson. The union hall was padlocked.

That 95 strikers were arrested that day. When General Drivers 574 in Minneapolis learned of the arrest, it offered to replenish the Fargo picket lines. Governor Moodie of North Dakota promptly stated he would "meet outsiders sent into the Fargo strike three to one".

The prisoners were held for bonds totalling \$47,000. By the end of the week only 46 remained in custody of the court, and picketing was again proceeding. In the meantime, the State legislature which was in session in Bismarck, passed a reso-

lution referring to the Fargo vigilantes as "hired thugs", demanding that the strikers be accorded their lawful rights, that all arrested be released from jail. A movement to circulate petitions demanding the recall of Bergeson got under way.

One of the arrested pickets, Ernest Falconer, shot and killed himself on his release from jail. Unable to comprehend the forces which held him in their grip, herded into jail like a common felon, he became despondent and took his life.

Packed Jury

On Wednesday, February 13, the strike trials began. By the following Tuesday the case went to the jury, hand-picked by the "law and order" machinery. A verdict of guilty was brought in, and on Feb. 23, William Cruden and Austin Swalde, president and secretary of the union, were sentenced to six months at hard labor, as was one other picket. The other thirteen were given two months. In the case of the leaders, bail bond was set at \$1,000 each, as the union's attorneys prepared to appeal the case.

As these lines are written, those jailed have not yet been released. Bail bonds have been offered by numb-less sympathizers, only to be cynically refused by States Attorney Bergeson. That the latter is beginning to feel a bit nervous, however, is shown by the fact that he has moved to dismiss the cases of the 65 charged with obstructing an officer and the 14 charged with riot. Despite five weeks of this legal

S. Y. L. Maps National Tour

The Spartacus Youth League is initiating a national tour. The representative of its National Committee, comrade Nathan Gould, will cover every city where we have S.Y.L. and W.P. branches in a coast-to-coast tour across the country. Branches are urged to make immediate preparations for meetings, affairs, etc. as outlined in the circular letters sent out by the national office.

The following is the route of the tour:

- APRIL:
New York—13, 14 (Regional Conference)
Newark, N. J.—15, 16
Dickson City, Pa.—19
Philadelphia—20, 21, 22
State College—23
Pittsburgh—24, 25
Youngstown, Ohio—26, 27, 28, 29
- (Regional Conference 27, 28).
Cleveland—30, May 1.
- MAY:
Columbus—2, 3, 4
Toledo—6
Detroit, Mich.—7, 8
Chicago, Ill.—10, 11, 12, 13 (Regional Conference 11, 12).
Gillespie—15, 16
St. Louis, Mo.—17
Kansas City—18, 19
Phoenix, Ariz.—22, 23
Los Angeles, Calif.—24, 25, 26, 27 (Regional Conference 25, 26).
Fresno, Cal.—28
San Francisco—29, 30, 31, June 1.
- JUNE:
Salt Lake City, Utah—3
Minneapolis, Minn.—7, 8, 9
Chicago, Ill.—11, 12, 13
Detroit, Mich.—20, 30.
- JULY:
Toronto, Canada—2, 3, 4
Buffalo, N. Y.—5.

terror plus the most vicious editorial barrage laid down by the local press at the beginning of the strike, one paper approvingly quoted a religious old woman as saying, "Miles Dunne should be taken out on the prairies, stripped to his underwear and made to walk bare-footed back to Minneapolis."

Just a word as to the Fargo employers. They have recently organized themselves as the "Associated Industries of Fargo and Moorhead" and documentary evidence is available proving that they have received no little help from the Minneapolis Citizens Alliance in carrying on their fight against the union.

One incident will show their temper. One of the unionists had the misfortune to lose a child a few weeks ago. The undertaker refused to bury the child without a cash payment. For ten days the dead child lay on a slab in the mortuary. Finally an emissary from the employers approached the man and told him credit would be advanced for the burial if he would quit the union and return to work. A friend then stepped in and paid for the burial. The man is still out on strike.

Local 173 is by no means beaten. A special daily strike bulletin (shades of 574) still appears. A troupe of union wrestlers and boxers is scheduled to perform nightly in nearby communities to raise money for the strike fund. All the roads leading into Fargo are picketed with immense signs, reading "16 Fargo Strikers Have Been Sentenced for 44 Months. Don't Trade in a Scab Town!" and "Industrial Pestilence Stalks the Streets of Fargo. Trade in Your Home Town!" The American Civil Liberties Union and the Non-Partisan Labor Defense have stepped into the case to assist in carrying the appeal to the State supreme court.

1500 'Bootleg' Coal Miners Organize

MT. CARMEL, Pa., March 24.—About 1,500 "bootleg" coal miners jammed a hall in this city to lay the foundation for a permanent organization and in preparation for a mass demonstration of 15,000 independent miners at Harrisburg on April 1.

"Bootleg" coal mining has become an extensive industry in these parts, involving hundreds of thousands of unemployed coal diggers and doing an annual business that runs into millions of dollars. This form of individual appropriation, by which the jobless miners eke out a miserable existence picking coal on land owned by the companies, has become a dire threat to the profits of the coal barons.

The "Liberal" Governor George H. Earle gave these thousands of otherwise jobless miners the cold shoulder in arranging and extending invitations to various interests affected by this lusty "depression industry" for a conference to formulate a policy on coal "bootlegging".

The angered miners cheered to the echo a plan to swoop down on the State capital in hundreds of coal trucks. There the thousands of assembled miners will demonstrate that they are ready for a final fight should the state and coal company interests interfere with their only source of livelihood.

Thomas Kennedy, Secretary of the U.M.W. of A. and now Lieutenant Governor and Michael Heartneady, President of District 7 and now Secretary of Mines in Earle's cabinet were accused of "selling out the miners" and working in the interests of the coal companies.

The most significant feature of the meeting, however, was the number of hitherto unknown leaders who have sprung from the rank and file in the battle to preserve their means of existence.

Mike Demchak acted as chairman of the meeting and was elected temporary president of the organization.

Organizations of the Independent Coal Producers Association have 1,800 members in Shamokin, 600 in Kulp and 600 in Atlas. Mt. Carmel is expected to have a branch of approximately 1,000 members.

Organizers are now in Shuylkill County preparing for April 1. A meeting is to be held on March 28 to give a permanent character to the organization.

This is to be followed by a convention when the majority of the coal mining communities are organized which will unify the branches and elect an executive committee.

IN THE UNIONS

By KARL LORE

One of America's oldest industrial unions is fighting for its life. The threat comes not from the employers primarily but from the officialdom of large and powerful craft internationalists who want to tear it to pieces.

The organized brewery workers have always been at odds with craft unionism. They always stood stubbornly for the right to organize all workers in and around breweries into their ranks. At the 1933 convention of the American Federation of Labor they were directed to turn over their teamsters, electricians, engineers, etc. to the respective craft unions. A referendum of the membership of the Brewery Workers turned down the proposal by an almost unanimous vote. Last year's A. F. of L. convention reaffirmed its previous decision but the brewers still refused to split their ranks.

Now the craft unionists, led by Dan Tobin of the International Teamsters Union, have begun a war to the death. In a number of cities jurisdiction strikes have been called. The Teamsters officials have joined hands with the employers to force craft workers out of the ranks of the industrial union. The boss signs an agreement with the Teamsters Union, fires any worker who stays loyal to the brewery workers' organization and hires men furnished by the craft organizations.

In Spokane, Washington, the union workers are all on strike or are locked out as a result. The district representative of the Teamsters has announced that a new stunt will be tried. An organization called the Brewery Inside Workers is to be formed. All Brewery workers in Spokane must belong to it if they want to work. It's a fight to the finish. And if all forms of unionism are wiped out in the struggle it can't be helped. Jurisdictional rights must be upheld.

Union Label

No one will disagree with the proposition that the marshalling of labor's purchasing power behind union made products is desirable. The worker's pay envelope can be a real weapon in the fight to entrench unionism. The "Union Buyers Clubs" which have been organized in a number of middle western cities are steps in that direction.

All too often, however, the union label is turned into a racket which actually works to the detriment of further organization. A union like the United Garment Workers, for example, will approach a boss with the proposition that he allow organization in his plant, in order to get the use of the label. The union in turn promises to push his pro-

duct in the unions, advertise it in the labor press and do its best to sell it to the labor movement in general. That is a good business proposition for small companies who are unable to carry on any advertising campaign of their own. It is good business, however, only as long as the number of union label firms is rather small. The inside track on the labor market is lost when a great many firms recognize the union and use its label on their products. In order to sell the union and the label, therefore, and to make it attractive to manufacturers, the union must keep itself small, refrain from any militant activities or organizing campaigns.

Metal Trades

One of the most intelligent reactionaries in the A. F. of L. is undoubtedly John P. Frey, president of the Metal Trades Department of the Federation. Frey is especially concerned to find a way to stem the rising tide of industrial unionism which threatens the jobs of so many of his fellow-officials in the Metal Trades Department. He has developed the idea of joint agreements for all crafts in any particular industry as a substitute for industry organization on a genuine basis. The strike last year of the workers at the Butte Mines of the Anaconda Copper Company was settled on this basis. Now the department has signed an agreement with the Sinclair Refining Company which covers all of its affiliated unions which have workers in the industry. Local councils are being formed all through the oil districts to which all labor organizations in the field may affiliate. Grievances and negotiations with employers are to be settled in a matter similar to that used by the system federations of railroad shop crafts. At best it is a shoddy substitute for the real article. The oil field workers need genuine industrial organization.

WHAT TO ATTEND

April 7, 8 P.M.—Harlem Mass Meeting on recent events there at Union Hall, 200 W. 135th St. Speakers: E. R. McKinney, A. J. Muste, Simon Williamson, chairman. Free.

April 12, Friday, 8:30 P.M.—A. J. Muste will speak in Brooklyn on "America's Role in the Next War". Auspices Flatbush Branch. Place to be announced later through District Office.

April 13, 8 P.M.—Spartacus Jam-boree at 2 W. 15th St. Dancing, entertainment, refreshment. Entrance by hat check, 15 cents.

April 19, Friday evening—Theater Party, Workers Party benefit, "Waiting for Lefty" and "Till the Day I Die". Tickets on sale at District Office (60c to \$1.65).

April 20, Saturday eve.—Spring Frolic and Chess Contest, N. Y. District membership, 2 W. 15th St., 3rd floor. Everyone invited. Paid "Red" Cabaret tickets honored at door.

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The Cross of Silver

Between Speeches Coughlin Engages In Practical Business or His Own

By DAN EASTMAN

We shall sketch the events of Father Coughlin's life through the days of Roosevelt's rise, election, and the launching of the NRA. The events are not important, but as revealing the character and tactics of the ambitious priest in his effort to become an American Hitler. Later we shall consider his program, and see not only its failings, which are numerous, but that Father Coughlin himself hardly takes his own program seriously.

In the spring of 1931 Father Coughlin found himself, as a result of his persistent attacks on socialism and the red serpent, broadcasting over a national hook-up to an audience running into millions. He had become a political figure of some importance, a figure which various capitalist cliques were not long in enlisting in their services.

Lubricating an Oil Plot

One week, out of a clear sky, Father Coughlin delivered a tirade against three companies, two American, and one the Royal Dutch Shell, who "were conspiring to restrict American oil production in favor of the Venezuelan fields". He revealed a suspiciously accurate knowledge of the transactions whereby this "conspiracy" was formed.

It is reasonable to suspect that Father Coughlin obtained his information from, and delivered his tirade at the request of, some American oil company which was getting rocked on the Venezuelan deal. How otherwise could he have had inside advance information, and why otherwise should he light on this specific deal, relatively obscure and unimportant in an imperialist world? Why a Venezuelan oil plot, when he might as well attack the oil and tin plot behind the Chaco war, or the American companies involved in the Brazilian cotton plot, or the nitrate plot in Chile, or the antimony plot in China, or the sugar plot in Cuba, or any other of thousands of "plots" to restrict American production in favor of foreign? Plots that are the recognized and regular procedure of finance capital which, hav-

ing exhausted the home market, flees to foreign markets, where coolie wages offer hope of restoring profits.

That Father Coughlin should single out an obscure example of imperialist exploitation in a world where literally thousands are prominent in the news every day, inclines us to suspect that some motive other than high Catholic-patriotic indignation prompted his sudden attack on Royal Dutch Shell and its un-named American co-plotters.

Perhaps it was that group of financiers centering around the Vanderlip-Rand Committee for the Nation, who moved the Father to indignation. Perhaps the Royal Dutch Shell neglected to invite this little group in on the deal. In any case we can be sure that Father Coughlin and the Vanderlip-Rand Committee have had some high old times together on other deals.

Father Coughlin supported Roosevelt in the 1932 elections, attacking Hoover for having favored the big investors over the little. The attack now appears a little ludicrous, since Roosevelt has carried the favoring of big investors over little to a point far beyond Hoover's poor efforts. For charity's sake we may suppose that Father Coughlin in 1932 was not aware that the government if it is to support capitalism at all, must necessarily support big investors over little, that even he himself, Father Coughlin, prime minister of God, could do nothing more if capitalism was to continue than favor monopoly capital over small investors. For charity's sake we may suppose that he was too stupid to realize this, but even stupidity will not explain his continuing this stand to the present day.

Making Charity Pay

There is a question we would like to ask in this connection: Is an investment of \$111,000 a big investment or a little investment? The question is not without pertinence. After the bank crash in Detroit, in the spring of 1933, the Detroit Free Press revealed that Father Coughlin, instead of putting

the receipts from his Radio league in the bank, the usual procedure for receipts from a so-called charitable enterprise, had been speculating with them in motor stocks, to the tune of \$111,000, losing \$13,000 on one deal alone, \$13,000 gathered, according to the Father's own story, from the hard earned nickels, dimes and quarters which his appreciative listeners contributed.

We might note for future reference that other moneys were invested in tax free government bonds. This investment, safe enough in itself, is interesting in the light of Father Coughlin's platform, of which one plank comes out unequivocally for the abolition of tax-free bonds. We must also note that the stock brokers who handled the Father's account were the firm of Harriss and Vose of New York, who will turn up again in this history along with the Vanderlip-Rand Committee and several other notables, including none other than the Chairman of the Republican Party.

For God and Silver

"This book," reads the preface of *The New Deal in Money*, written by Charles Coughlin himself, "is dedicated to those persons who still persist in believing that man is more precious than gold". A fine sentiment from the Priest's own pen, and a fitting caption for the next chapter of his life.

Only once during his entire career has Father Coughlin been enticed away from his modest home, his \$750,000 Tower of the Little Flower. On the evening of December 9, 1933, he consented to give a lecture at Madison Square Garden in New York, a lecture on money. He spoke under the auspices of the Vanderlip-Rand Committee for the Nation.

His speech, as were and are all his speeches on the money problem, was for the abandonment of the gold standard and the monetization of silver; in short, silver inflation, the old greenback scheme, the root of ninety percent of past mid-western political insurgency. Father Coughlin, however, introduced a new note of righteous Christianity into the matter of inflation. Not only was it reprehensible to "believe man more precious than gold", and when Father Coughlin talks about gold he means gold specifically, he is not talking in biblical terms as he would in general, but as he himself said, "I send a call for the mobilization of all Christianity against gold; the restoration of

silver is a Christian concern."

But a storm was brewing. Congress authorized an investigation to determine just who held the largest amounts of silver in the United States. The gold lobby in Congress, judging from their own souls, had a keen suspicion that the silver lobby was not entirely disinterested, that there might perhaps be silver speculation lurking in the back of all this Christian inflationism. They were right.

All Roads Lead to Wall St.

The investigators reported in April, 1934. Guess who held silver in quantities of 25,000 ounces or more? Frank Vanderlip, founder of the Committee for the Nation, E. L. Cord, member of the Committee for the Nation and financial giant of the automobile, aviation and shipbuilding businesses, Everett Sanders, Chairman of the Republican National Committee, Harriss & Vose, New York stockbrokers, and—the Radio League of the Little Flower, which topped them all with 500,000 ounces held on margin! Truly astonishing: all our old friends together again. Vanderlip, whose Committee sponsored Coughlin's Christian attacks on gold, Harriss and Vose who helped Coughlin lose \$13,000 in speculation in automobiles, and the Radio League, Father Coughlin's own corporate child!

Father Coughlin never succeeded in explaining away this incident. His defense we quote from the New York Times of April 29.

He pointed out that in a speech the previous December he had said, "When at times contributions to the Radio League of the Little Flower surpass current expenditures the surplus is temporarily invested where it will be safest." He neglected to show how a gamble on silver was a safe investment, and further neglected to show how marginal investment always considered a risky business under any circumstances, made his investment any safer. The fact is that he gambled, and gambled as wildly as possible, covering \$300,000 with \$20,000, as he reveals when he says, "This time I purchased 500,000 of silver with an investment of \$20,000 through the firm of Harriss and Vose."

He further neglected to clarify the connection between his marginal investment and his "mobilization of all Christianity for the restoration of silver". But that hardly needed explanation.

Five in California Quit C. P. And Join Workers Party

The following statement of five leading members of the Communist Party in Porterville, Cal., speaks for itself. The document is a classic; comment would be superfluous. Porterville is in the heart of the California orange belt. The now defunct Cannery and Agricultural Workers Union (wrecked by the C. P.) had one of its strongest centers here. The statement follows:

Porterville, California
March 27, 1935

District Committee,
District Thirteen,
Communist Party U.S.A.:

We are resigning from the Communist Party. Here are our membership books with the exception of comrade B. L.'s who burnt his up. There is no use talking, or for you to try explaining things any longer, because you bureaucrats make it impossible for us to work like bolsheviks. Besides this, you're not just a bureaucracy but you're bankrupt to boot. The terrible mess you led the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union into, which resulted in its complete collapse, is positive proof of your bankruptcy.

And then the way you are now trying to get the A. F. of L. to give you a charter here in Porterville for the agricultural workers is about as crazy a thing as we can think of. You call a meeting, elect party members as officers, and then expect the A. F. of L. to give you a charter when your tactics are as plain as the nose on your face to everyone. Do you think the A. F. of L. is going to give the Communist Party a charter? We suppose you'll be getting out a leaflet in a couple of weeks "exposing" the A. F. of L. There's no hope, you're done for.

And to top all this off you want us to organize a Labor Party. What do you think we are anyway?

We quit. And we're going to apply for membership in the Workers Party. Its program is going to develop a real vanguard in America.

(Signed) T. H. JAMESON
B. L. COLLINS
W. A. PITTS
MRS. W. A. PITTS
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