

CIO GETS SETBACK IN STEEL; GOVERNMENT AIDS BOSSES

Eighteen union men are murdered. Hundreds more await trial on trumped-up charges. Every known method of strike-breaking was used by "little steel" to terrorize the steel workers. In spite of the heroism of the rank and file, the strike is broken.

Since this is the first serious setback that the CIO has experienced, the course of the strike must be carefully considered, not only to understand the reasons for this defeat, but, more important, to be able to make concrete proposals which will help the steel workers to victory.

The most important single lesson to be learned from the history of strikes is: "Any strike policy of a union leadership that does not place its emphasis on the fighting power of the workers, on the independent force of the union itself, is doomed in advance to failure. The reason for this is quite plain: The capitalist is not really affected by the strike unless it stops production or hinders it so greatly that the employer begins to feel a serious loss in profits and so is compelled to come to terms with the union. Only the workers can exert such pressure, for only the workers can operate the machines. That is why the union leaders must always proceed on the basis that their most powerful instrument is the union itself."

Government Aids the Bosses

The employer uses hired thugs, the anti-union press, armed vigilante committees and other means too numerous to mention, but his most powerful instrument in breaking the strike is the government. The Government includes the local police, the national guard, the courts and the local, state and federal administrations. They all pretend to be "neutral in labor disputes," but under the pretense of defending the right to work, they always act as scabherders, and protect the interests of the bosses.

Any policy which fails to explain to the workers the role played by the government, and talks about the "community of interest" between capital and labor, must be fought against if the strike is to be won. Only a policy of struggle, or reliance on the militant fighting spirit of the workers, can really bring the steel barons to their knees.

Leaders Go to Politicians

From the very first day of the strike, it became increasingly clear that the leadership had no plan of militant struggle against the companies. Instead of building an efficient strike machine, they spent their time in Washington and Columbus lobbying with Roosevelt and Davey—begging them to make the companies sign up with the CIO. Both efforts were futile. Roosevelt answered with a "hands off" policy which in reality meant support to the steel barons. Governor Davey sent the national guard to open the mills and protect the scabs.

Without a program of struggle, the union leadership was unable to combat the clever offensive of the bosses. As a result, a walkout which paralyzed every plant of the companies involved in seven states of the country, affecting more than 70,000 workers, soon reached a point where a substantial majority of the men had gone back to work.

Why did so many men go back to work? We cannot call them scabs as we would ordinarily brand those who work in defiance of a picket line. It is the pressure of the state forces, courts, na-

tional guard, police, and thugs, combined with economic pressure from their creditors which finally force honest workers back to the mills. But even this combined force would have been insufficient if the policies of the SWOC leaders had not led to the demoralization and confusion of the workers.

On the whole, the steel workers fortunately do not think badly of the union; instead they feel that Governor Davey double-crossed them. The thought in nearly every steel worker's mind is that "the national guard broke the strike." Quite true, the national guard did break the strike. But who appealed to Davey for support? Who told the workers that "the national guard will keep the mills closed"? Who built up the illusion that the administration from Davey to Roosevelt favored the steel union? The S. W. O. C. leaders did!

Class collaboration Policy

The union leadership from Philip Murray to John Mayo built this illusion which completely disarmed the workers, leaving them helpless in the face of the national guard when it showed its true colors. The policy of confusing the workers as to the character of the government—the tool of the capitalists—disarms them, leaves them demoralized at the critical moment. Although the CIO principle of industrial organization is correct and has succeeded in organizing the masses in the basic industries where the craft basis failed, nevertheless the general policy of the CIO leaders is to solve the workers' difficulties on the false basis that labor and capital have common interests. They build up the workers' confidence in the capitalist government machine. They proceed in all their strategy, tactics and organization from the basis that it is only a few "economic royalists" who are holding back from recognizing the unions and making the living standards of the workers so low. The workers will continue to pay, to suffer untold union proceeds in all its work hardships in vain, until their from the basic principle that their's is an uncompromising struggle going on between capital and the working class.

The strike was called for the purpose of gaining a signed contract between the companies and the CIO. No demands were made concerning higher wages and shorter hours, in spite of the fact that the rising costs of living justify them. The steel workers for the most part had not been in unions before and did not fully understand, nor was any attempt made to explain to them, the reasons why the signing of a contract was important. Not only the workers themselves but, in particular, the middle class, could not understand why the signing of a contract was so important unless a demand for higher wages and better working conditions was also made.

Picket Lines Neglected

No attempt was made to have the workers come to the picket line on their regular shifts, which would have insured a mass picket line at all times. Picket captains were not selected until the third or fourth day and there was no system by which these captains could get in touch with the members easily. Strike relief was inadequate and improperly organized. Although the auto workers in Flint proved how valuable a women's emergency brigade can be, not only for feeding the

pickets but also for picket duty, no organized attempt was made to encourage the women to form a union auxiliary of any kind; and many a union man was, therefore, influenced by his passive wife to go back to work.

Probably no other field of activity was so neglected as the field of strike publicity. In this situation where the entire valley was paralyzed, where 35,000 steel workers in Mahoning Valley, alone were affected, in a community where the entire population depends for its existence directly or indirectly on the steel mills, no regular strike bulletin was issued. Nothing, no bulletin, no mass meetings outside of those at picket lines, no parades, nothing to spike the vicious lies of the company-controlled press. The only publicity available to the majority of those affected by the strike was the local newspapers such as the Youngstown Vindicator. This paper carried on a strike-breaking policy from the very beginning; yet this was the medium through which the steel worker got his news of the strike. The majority of the steel workers did not even come to the picket lines, but remained at home and dug in the garden, went fishing and only occasionally drove down to the picket line to see what was happening. Gradually many of them succumbed to the vicious propaganda.

The SWC leaders have no excuse for the failure to carry on this absolutely necessary work. Many times they were approached by rank and file delegations, with resolutions from picket lines but they brushed them aside. The answer cannot lie in the talk about no funds for it is well known that the CIO treasury is ample to cover the cost of a strike bulletin. The answer lies in the fact that the whole policy of the union was on the basis of maneuvering with Roosevelt instead of concentrating on the workers themselves.

To say the union members had no control over the strike is a gross understatement of fact. Even the organizers in complete charge of the plants had nothing to do with the strike strategy, which was decided by the very top men in the CIO. There was no central strike committee of any kind, let alone one elected by the members of the union. Resolutions or suggestions to the leaders got absolutely no attention. The policy and tactics were decided and there was nothing the workers could do but carry them out blindly and hope for the best.

What can be done? It must be said quite clearly and fearlessly that the fate of the steel union lies in the successful development of a left wing in the SWOC which can exert enough pressure to carry out a union policy which is in accord with the real interests of the workers—a left wing which will make concrete proposals for the building of the CIO in steel.

The most important issues that the left wing must immediately raise are: Democracy in the union; workers' education; elected strike committees; the publication of a strike bulletin; and a general strike policy on the basis of a struggle program. Around the left wing will crystallize all the more militant, more intelligent workers who are intent on the building of the union, on educating workers to depend only on their own organized strength.

Progressive Steel Workers Group
Youngstown, Ohio

Party Locals Rally of The Left Wing

Two more important party locals have solidarized themselves with the left wing.

By unanimous decision of the membership, Local St. Louis County, Missouri, addressed a sharp letter to the NEC, calling for an emergency national convention to settle the party struggle democratically. "If this is evidence," it says of the right-wing charges, "then this is the USSR in its latter-day aspect..." The wording of the charges proves that this is a fundamental political conflict between the right and left wings of the party and not an attempt to cleanse the party of disruptive elements.

"We express our unqualified solidarity with all the members of the Appeal group who have been disciplined in any way by the New York committee. They are our Socialist Party comrades, fighting by our side to make the party a truly revolutionary organization that will not crack or smash in a critical time."

Another unanimous decision, of the Central Branch of Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, backed the left wing, denouncing "capitulation to La Guardia and Peoples Frontism" and concluding that "we express and pledge our solidarity with the expelled comrades and will aid them in their struggles."

Indiana Unanimous

By unanimous decision, the Indiana State Executive Committee of the party on August 29 addressed the following demands to the NEC:

"The State Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Indiana proposes and demands that:

"1. The N.E.C. immediately reverse the decisions of the Local New York City Central Committee and reinstate the expelled comrades and guarantee to them all democratic rights.

"2. The N. E. C. instruct Local New York to conduct an independent socialist campaign in the elections in New York City.

"3. The N.E.C. immediately restore the charter to the California state organization.

"4. The N.E.C. issue a call for a special national convention in order that the membership may itself have the right—as is its duty—to decide the fate of the party in the present crisis; and that in order that such a special convention may actually represent the party membership, we demand the immediate reinstatement of all expelled and suspended comrades and the immediate cessation of the expulsion drive.

"The State Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Indiana declares its full political, moral and organizational solidarity with the comrades expelled in New York and with the state officers and left-wing comrades in California and pledges to help make known to the party membership the splitting tactics of the right wing and centrist combination in New York and nationally."

Indianapolis Local

Local Marion County, leading mid-west party center, came out solidly in support of the Appeal on August 23rd.

The local's resolution follows in part:

"The railroading through of the expulsions of fifty-two comrades of the left-wing by the Altman-Thomas-Valenti clique in control of the administration of Local New York on August 9th was but a part of the campaign of the Right-Wing to sell the party out to La Guardia and the

labor bureaucrats of the American Labor Party. This attempt to liquidate independent revolutionary socialist politics, in complete violation of the party constitution and resolutions, could not be successfully carried through with the left-wing in the party. So, in order to carry out this traitorous move it was necessary for the right-wing to expel the left-wing who were vigorously opposing this sell-out and exposing the splitting tactics of the right-wing combination.

Local Marion County declares its full political, moral and organizational solidarity with the comrades expelled in New York and nationally."

Local Lynn Acts

By unanimous vote, the flourishing industrial Lynn, Massachusetts, local of the Socialist Party, adopted the following Appeal resolution on August 15:

"The Lynn Local demands the calling of an emergency convention of the Socialist Party at the earliest possible date. Such a Convention is necessary to take action upon the crucial situation in New York brought about by the illegal wholesale expulsions of revolutionary Socialists and by the determination of the Altman-Thomas-Valenti group and their supporters to line up the S. P. behind the liberal capitalist candidate for mayor of New York, La Guardia; and is necessary, generally, to halt the determined drive of unscrupulous Right-Wing elements to split and wreck the Socialist Party nationally."

The Lynn local plays a leading role in the heart of the New England factory district.

On August 22, the Lynn Local informed the National and State offices of the party that "it considers it our duty as revolutionists to declare our full solidarity with the expelled comrades and pledges them our unqualified support in their struggle with the right-wing splitters."

Conn. Secretary

Victor Harris, State Secretary of the Socialist Party of Connecticut, charged that "the NEC resolution on Spain, a major resolution, is in violation of the (convention) resolution on the Peoples Front," "the NAC concessions to Wisconsin are in violation of the Trade Union (convention) resolution" and "the NEC resolution on inner-party policy is in itself a violation of the spirit of democratic centralism." Harris in his letter of August 26 to Roy Burt, declares that "when we say 'discussion', we do not mean, as Gus Tyler apparently does, that the members talk over how to carry out the party line. That is a characteristic of the Communist Party, not a democratic Socialist Party." Harris declares he will fight for revolutionary Socialism "with the NEC if at all possible, but against the NEC if it violates the plain mandate of the Chicago convention."

"The principles of revolutionary Socialism," concludes Comrade Harris, "must always be held higher than any particular group of men who interpret them... Naturally the sincere and devoted Socialist will think twice before censuring his leaders for their errors, for he too may be wrong. But once his mind is made up it is his duty to take his stand for what he considers right. I have done so."