

Railroad Union Leaders Move In Wage Cut Crisis Without Ranks

Unionist Points Need For Planning United Action To Combat Employers' Offensive And Forestall Sell-out Maneuvers

By RAILROAD UNIONIST

A proposed raid on the living standards of railroad workers is now before us, the railroads having served notice of a 15 per cent cut in wages to take effect July 1, just nine months after an increase of approximately six per cent became effective. According to the Association of American Railroads, the cut is necessary in order to "save the industry."

Railroad labor leaders counter this by pointing out that the wage bill is not the cause of the present difficulties of the roads; that if the railroad managements and those who control the financial policies of the roads would revise the topheavy financial structures with which they are burdened, there would be no need of asking the workers to sacrifice their living standards. Any one reasonably well informed on these matters must agree with the statement made by President Robertson of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers, at the Washington conference on March 24, that if we could wipe out the railroad wage bill entirely, we could not save the industry.

What Is To Be Done?

But notice has been served on the workers and the question now uppermost in the mind of every one of them is: What program and policies must we adopt to prevent this raid on our pay checks? The workers who will be affected by the outcome of this struggle should have something to say in determining the program and policies to be used. Yet up to the present, there is no indication from our officers that they will be consulted.

A statement issued by the union executives on March 16 points out that the railroads can get relief without cutting wages, which is termed "as ineffective as cutting a corn to cure a toothache." At the Washington conference on March 24 the executives were unanimous in their position that a cut would not be accepted. Since that time several officers have been quoted to the effect that any attempt to reduce wages would be fought to the bitter end. But so far the union memberships have not been advised as to what preparations are being made for this "bitter end" struggle. Statements to the press are not enough. Something far more effective is needed: The mobilization of the workers behind a correct program of action that will have their united support. It should be evident, even to our present leadership, that such support can best be had after the workers have had the opportunity to discuss and approve the program to be adopted.

Action Must Be Planned

We are aware that the Railway Labor Act prescribes a certain course to be followed in negotiations of this kind. But if we are to believe our leaders that this will be a fight to the bitter end, while at the same time the managements announce "no compromise," it should be plain that no agreement will be reached under that law. This being the case, it is high time preparations were made for the most effective use of the organized workers' main defense: their economic strength. But in spite of the limited time remaining, no proposed action has been submitted for membership discussion and approval. Why? Are the activities of the rank-and-file again to be limited to the formality of authorizing their officers to "negotiate to a conclusion?"

The results obtained in the wage movement of 1931-2 are too fresh in our minds for us to be convinced that such conferring of authority works out satisfactorily. Then as now, statements were issued to the press announcing our opposition to a wage cut and informing the public that "labor cannot be called upon to pay a dime to idle capital." Nevertheless the cut was accepted "in the hope that our action may improve the health of our industry.... may stimulate a revival of business and advance the general welfare." The result was that the workers dropped approximately \$450,000,000 into the tin cup of the railroads between 1932-5. Are we again to be asked to confer unlimited authority on our leaders and take chances on another settlement based on "hope?"

For United Action

I am sure all railroad workers will agree that in order to conduct an effective fight against a wage cut, united action by all

workers in the industry is an absolute necessity. How to achieve this unity under an organizational set-up of 21 autonomous crafts is a problem we must consider and solve before any "bitter end" fight can be successfully made. The charges of bad faith and double-cross indulged in by executives of some of the organizations as a result of experiences in the "concerted movement" of 1937, should convince us that changes in our organizational structure are necessary. An ever-increasing number of railroad workers understand this and there are signs that some of the leaders are being forced to admit it.

A report of the March 24 Washington conference states that "Brother A. O. Wharton... called attention to the activities of the C.I.O. He warned the Pelley Committee that if we should agree to a reduction in wages the railroads in a few months would be facing a much more serious situation than that which they are now facing." The same report states that "Brother Roy Horn also called attention to the threat of the C.I.O." What other conclusion can be drawn than that Wharton's intention was to point out that the workers' reaction to a wage cut would be loss of faith in their present leadership, making them easy victims for C.I.O. organizers? In that case the roads would have to deal with an organization that would offer a more militant opposition and drive harder bargains with the railroad bosses. Whatever their intention, Wharton and Horn did, in effect, recognize the superiority of industrial over craft unionism as an instrument for defending the best interests of the workers.

Verbal Intransigence

The newspaper Labor had an article on May 10 containing quotations from different union leaders to the effect that a wage cut will not be accepted and questioning the intelligence of any one who believes railroad workers will submit to a cut at this time. The statement is undoubtedly true, if the workers are to have the final say in the matter. But if past routine is to be followed, it is useless to talk about what the workers will or will not do. They will simply approve in advance any settlement made, good, bad, or indifferent.

If our officers have a plan of action, by all means let us have it. July 1 is not far off. Why are not union meetings being called for discussion of a program to be adopted? Nothing of the kind is being done, and evidently nothing will be done unless the workers insist on it. It is our duty to make the best preparations possible for our defense. Are we railroad workers to be satisfied with leaving such preparations entirely in the hands of the union officers without the opportunity of making our own wishes known? If not, we must take the following action:

An Immediate Program

1. Attend our local lodge meetings and demand that general chairmen arrange for joint union meetings where the workers may be given all available information and where they may propose, discuss and take joint action on what the majority decides is the best program.

2. Demand that united action of all workers in the industry be made a reality in this fight and that craft interests be not allowed to jeopardize such unity. In the event of a strike vote, it must be a joint ballot of all organizations, with action authorized by majority vote of the members of all crafts.

3. Authorize our officers to negotiate, but not to a conclusion. The workers who will be affected

Labor Guard Is Answer To Menace of Hagueism

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Building Trades Council and Teamsters Union. Their presence was an insult to every worker in New Jersey and a disgrace to the A.F.L. These corrupt bureaucrats ought to be scourged out of the labor movement. The marchers were made up of conscripted relief workers and Hague officeholders.

Fireworks following the review displayed such fiery Ku-Klux slogans as "Keep our country safe from Communism," "America for Americans Only, Reds Keep Out," "Reds Stay Out of the U.S.A.," as well as blazing figures of Uncle Sam, the Statue

900,000 Rail Workers Face Big Pay Slash

Railway Labor Act Will Be Used To Bog Down Militant Action

Over 900,000 railroad workers are threatened by the recent decision of the carriers to reduce wages 15 per cent. The unions involved—of which there are 20 large ones—maintain that already some workers are receiving an hourly wage of only 20 cents and that more than 100,000 workers receive less than 40 cents. According to the "best available statistics, the average monthly wage during 1937 was \$133.50, despite the fact that some highly skilled workers were able to average about \$175.

Unemployment in the railroad industry is at its peak. Today there are 6,023 fewer workers employed than in March, 1933. Since last July, 260,000 workers have been laid off and part time employment has been on the increase.

Back to 1932!

The 15 per cent cut would save the carriers about \$250,000,000 a year and reduce wages below the 1932 level after the 10 per cent cut.

In compliance with the Railway Labor Act, the carriers have already given official notice that they intend to put the cut into effect on July 1. The unions have given their first answer in the form of a strike threat.

The Railway Labor Act is constructed to extinguish the militancy of the workers. According to its terms, the National Mediation Board may intervene of its own volition or be appealed to by either side. Once the board is called in, it can stall for months and bring uninterrupted pressure on the unions to accept the carriers' demands. If the unions hold firm the board may suggest another wearing down process: voluntary arbitration. If either side rejects voluntary arbitration, and the workers vote to strike, the board notifies the President of a threat to interstate commerce. The President then has the power to create a "fact-finding" board to "investigate" and report within 30 days. Until another 30 days have elapsed, neither side may act.

Firm Stand Needed

The workers must thus be prepared to fight the government as well as the carriers. For the next four months or more they will have to remain firm in the face of government-carrier pressure and demand at the very outset, before any bargaining is entered into, the opening of the books. Should the debit side of the ledger be appreciable, the workers have no reason to resign themselves to a cut, but must demand nationalization of the railroads and workers' control; that is, the workers must strike for public ownership and their own committees to fix rates, wages, hours and capital investment.

The opening of the books may, however, show the unreasonableness of the carriers' demand for a 15 per cent cut. Whether the railroads are bankrupt or not, the workers must prepare themselves for a long struggle with the possibility of the National Guard and the army being called out. The success of the struggle for public ownership and workers' control, or even for the prevention of this and future pay cuts, depends on immediate preparation for workers' defense groups.

ed by the agreement must have the final say, by referendum vote, as to approval or rejection. If union democracy is anything but a name, this is union democracy in action.

Longo sentenced John Longo, framed by Hague, was given a nine months sentence on Thursday. "You wanted to be a martyr," roared the Hague judge who sentenced him, "well, that is your privilege." Longo's sentence is being appealed by his lawyer, Vito Marcantonio, who has proof of perjury on the part of the Hague jury that condemned Longo.

Hagueism is a form of prevent-

N. Y. Auto Builders Strike In 35 Shops

NEW YORK.—Seven hundred members of the United Automobile Workers, Local 259, walked out on strike from 35 auto body building shops June 2. The strike was called after all attempts to renew existing agreements with the employers' association had failed.

The agreement with the association expired on May 28. The union refused to concede to the open shop demanded by the association and interprets this demand as an attempt to destroy the union and go back to open shop conditions.

Already, of the 28 association shops, 10 have signed agreements up to June 2, including the chairman of the association committee, the Colonial Body Company.

Albert Fischer, Chairman of the Union's negotiations committee, in a statement to the shop stewards, expressed belief that within a few days the majority of workers would go back to work under signed agreements.

Akron Teachers Demand Release For Fred Beal

Anti-War Resolution Is Also Passed; Active Year Comes To End

At a recent meeting the Akron Federation of Teachers passed an anti-war resolution similar to that passed by the Minneapolis Central Labor Union.

At the same time a resolution demanding the release of Fred Beal was passed. Both resolutions are to be submitted to the state convention of the Ohio State Federation of Teachers for action.

The federation is ending its most active year. Recent struggles of the federation have centered around the placing of the first grade on half-time, which necessitated the laying off of 38 teachers; the unnecessary cutting of the school year three days at the behest of the chamber of commerce agents on the school board; and the projected discrimination of religious and racial groups in the teachers' college of the local university.

Teachers in Lead

The federation was the only teachers' organization opposing these reactionary measures. As a result of its progressive policies the federation has earned the enmity of school officials, who have retaliated by attempting to fire the progressive financial secretary of the organization. His case is being fought with the support of the organized labor movement of Akron.

At its last meeting the federation rejoined the Trades and Labor Assembly, from which it was expelled several months ago, when the C.I.O. locals and other progressives were thrown out. Once more the federation will act as a polarizing force for the progressive and militant rank-and-file who still compose a majority of the body despite their domination by a crew of building trades fakery.

Petitions Won't Do

All the incidents in the fight against Hague in the past few months prove that he cannot be overthrown by petitions to the President, by prayer from the clergy, by parades, or by individual protests. Hague can only be dislodged and his machine broken up by an organized mass force prepared for serious and sustained struggle in the very citadel of his power. While they serve to keep ablaze the fire of revolt, small inadequately defended meetings only result in victories for Hague. They cannot successfully defy his regime or crush his storm-troopers and uniformed gangsters.

To smash Hagueism the masses in Northern New Jersey must be summoned into direct action against him. With the A.F.L. leadership under Hague's thumb, in the task of mobilizing and organizing the people against Hague falls upon the C.I.O. unions and the W.A.A.

The C.I.O. unions should postpone action no longer. If they are not to be overwhelmed

Office Union Session Sterile Under Gag Rule

Stalinist Leadership Concentrates On Keeping Opposition Silenced At Washington Office Workers' Session

The Stalinist controlled United Office and Professional Workers Union, C.I.O., held its second national convention at Washington, D. C., May 18 to 22. The Stalinists made it plain beforehand that they intended to achieve "unity" at the convention. It developed that "unity" was to be achieved by the systematic exclusion of anyone who might take exception to their reactionary program.

This aim was carried out so effectively, and the meeting became so sterile and devoid of dissent, that President Merrill found it necessary to persuade the delegates to comment on the various canned proposals. Taking him at his word, some of the delegates took the floor. But when they naively dared to raise objections they found themselves caustically rebuked by the same Merrill. One proposal after another went through with record speed. Sporadically, however, the embarrassing quietude would be broken by some hardy soul—in correction of a typographical or grammatical error. The chairman repeatedly slurred through requests of negative votes, knowing it was a waste of breath.

Opposition Baited

Presaging the happenings at the convention, a campaign to raid, to silence and to destroy any opposition was carried on. Nevertheless several delegates who were opposed by the Administration were elected and duly accredited by their locals. But when these delegates arrived at the convention, they found that mere election was not sufficient. It seemed that certain technicalities had been overlooked by their locals. Per capita taxes were not paid up, reports were not properly drawn, copies of receipts had not been submitted, etc. The delegates were not seated on one or the other of these grounds. Some aura of credence might have surrounded these if dozens of delegates representing locals derelict in the same way or to a greater extent had not been seated.

Local 34, San Francisco, sent Ernest Norback as its delegate. After traveling 3,000 miles to participate in the convention, Norback was promptly refused a seat on the pretext that per capita was not paid. Previously Merrill, international president, had offered to accept a note in payment of back per capita. An appeal to him at the convention to accept such a note and seat Norback resulted in a flat refusal. Local 24 had refused to be appended to Stalinism. Easton, regularly elected delegate of the St. Louis local, met the same fate on the ground that the financial secretary of his local had failed to fill out her report properly.

New Constitution

A new constitution was adopted which virtually puts the Union in the pockets of the Stalinists. Local autonomy has been eliminated for a highly centralized, top leadership organization in the best Stalinist tradition. The constitution empowers the General Executive Board to revoke charters, redistribute local memberships, and control local finance and functional machinery without the formality of consulting the local people involved. The reins of dictatorship were drawn so tightly that a protest was made by a rabid Administration supporter, Nathan Rothman, a member of the executive board of Local 16. Rothman said that the clause permitting revocation of charters gave the international officers too much power. Rothman was shut up immediately and hardly uttered another word for the balance of the convention.

Only a few resolutions on non-controversial matters were put before the convention for discussion although some 160 were accepted by the Resolutions Committee. The rest were summarily referred to the incoming General Executive Board. The top leadership would handle these matters as they had everything else.

However, the dismal and re-

and their meetings dispersed, they must be ready to defend themselves against the assaults of Hague's storm-troopers and police. They must organize their own labor guard.

pressive atmosphere of the convention was not unrelieved. A progressive program was presented by the National Progressive League of the U.O.P.W.A., even though its representatives were denied seating and the privilege of the floor, through its organ "The National Progressive Office Workers" which was distributed to delegates against the opposition of the Administration. Richard Lewis, chairman of the convention arrangements committee, called the manager of the hotel in which the convention was held to eject distributors of the publication.

The League exposed the Stalinist raid on the San Francisco, Local 16, and proposed a constitution giving local autonomy and resolutions calling for:

Concrete Proposals

1. Unity of A.F. of L. and C.I.O. without sacrificing the principle of industrial unionism.
2. Greater and more efficient activity in organizing the unorganized.
3. Democratic union structure including representation of minorities.
4. Striking a proper balance between trade union problems and political questions that confront the trade unions.
5. Reduction of per capita tax so that Locals would have sufficient funds for organizational work.
6. Expansion of the W.P.A. program to take care of all unemployed.
7. Organization of W.P.A. white collar workers into locals of the U.O.P.W.A., obtaining union conditions for them, etc.
8. Opposition to the annexation of the union to the Communist Party, by way of affiliation to every stooge organization of the Stalinists.

The Nat. Progressive League has representation in locals throughout the country, including Chicago, St. Louis, Boston, Cincinnati, Toledo, Pittsburgh, Baltimore and San Francisco. The N.P.L. program was submitted to the Resolutions Committee which refused to present it on the floor of the convention. A request for the floor by Ernest Norback so that he could present the facts of the outrageous San Francisco situation was denied.

Kranis Opposed

The first and last sign of opposition to the steam-roller occurred in connection with the nomination of Jack Kranis as a vice-president and member of the General Executive Board. Kranis is a member of Industrial Insurance Agents Local 30, New York. Six of the ten delegates from this local opposed the election of Kranis on the ground that he was practically unknown in either the Local or International. They proposed the election of Charles Caplan who has taken a leading part in the organization of the Local. Nonetheless Kranis was elected, doubtless on the one qualification that really mattered, i.e., membership in the Communist Party.

The tragic rubber stamp character of the convention once more confirmed the aims of the Stalinists in the U.O.P.W.A. and in every union cursed with the blight of their control. Minorities, however substantial their numbers, are consistently denied representation in the leading bodies of the union. Every obstacle is placed in the path of a minority member seeking participation in the organizational and general life of the union.

Nevertheless beneath the surface of complete Stalinist domination, important opposition forces are developing. The revolt in the Insurance Agents, largest section of the International, pre-figures important developments in the future. The formation of the National Progressive League with its paper gives the Progressives an opportunity to crystallize the opposition that exists in the ranks of the union and rally to its support all those elements working for the building of a healthy progressive office workers union.

West Coast C. P. Has Hard Time Obeying New Dictum

SAN FRANCISCO.—The Communist Party in San Francisco is having a hard time obeying the injunction in the party's new constitution forbidding its members from having "social or political relations" with Trotskyists. The trouble is that the Stalinists either have to consort with the Trotskyists or else stay out of the anti-Fascist fight altogether.

Last week, as was reported,

Help Refused To Dying Baby, Miner Tells Jury

Union Card Costs Miner Life of Infant Son As Company Doctor Neglects Child At Order Of Harlan Mine Boss

Additional testimony by union miners and sympathizers, revealing the terror and intimidation used against union members and organizers by the owners of the coal mines of Harlan County, last week concluded the case presented by the government in the trial of 19 corporation and 44 individuals, charged with conspiring to prevent organization of mine workers.

Developments last week included the arrest of two of the defendants after they had attempted to intimidate government witnesses during the trial. They were Merle Middleton, a third cousin of Theodore R. Middleton, former High Sheriff of Harlan County, and Lee Hubbard, former deputy and pool-room owner.

Bosses Suborn Perjury

Ernest Huff, young coal miner from Ages, Ky., was called into Hubbard's poolroom and taken into the backroom to discuss "particular business." The young miner promptly reported the brazen attempt to force him to recant his testimony, and the two men, already free on bail, were arrested and charged with subornation of perjury.

Another highlight of the case for the prosecution was the story of Boyd Isom, former machine

NEW EVIDENCE IN FIGHT FOR JAILED MINERS

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tion's trial exhibit photographs, supposed to have been taken from that window, gave a view of the spot near a water birch where the guards fell.

But a corrected survey of the terrain involved, made by Prof. Pugsley, now reveals that the trial photographs were taken from another point, some of them 60 feet to one side of where they should have been taken, and 30 feet above the proper level. Prof. Pugsley's findings were submitted in affidavit form.

Prof. Bangson's sworn report disclosed that he had made cuttings of typical trees in the "long and wide line" cited, and other scientific tests, which showed clearly that those trees were of ample height and fullness in May, 1931, to prevent any one in the Smith-Kelly window from seeing the mine-guards.

Prior to today's hearing the defense had presented a mass of evidence to show that the mine-guards were killed when they attacked a strike-picket line with automatic rapid-fire guns. One union miner, Carl Richmond, also was killed in the battle, but no one was ever prosecuted for his death.

More Workers Killed As Jamaica Strikes Spread

The revolt of labor in the Island of Jamaica against the appalling conditions in the colony continues to spread in spite of the violence with which it has been met by the armed forces of British imperialism. The latest strike wave began in Kingston on May 23 and rapidly extended to rural districts.

On May 31, new strikes were reported in many parts of the island. Banana workers on United Fruit farms in the "Spanish Town" area struck for higher wages. Strikers paraded at Montego Bay, Anotta Bay, and Port Maria, virtually suspending business in those regions.

British Soldiers Patrol

British soldiers, Island militia, armed police and volunteers patrolled the strike areas with, as the dispatch to the New York Times moderately expressed it, "intimidation of workers at several places."

On June 3, in a clash with rural strikers in northern Jam-

operator for the Harlan Central Coal Company, who charged that union membership had cost him the life of his infant son.

Federal Judge S. Church Ford ruled against defense objections and Isom was permitted to answer Prosecutor Brian McMahon's question about what Harry Bennett, superintendent of Harlan Central Coal and a defendant in the trial, had said to him a few days after the burial of the Isom baby.

Damning Testimony

"He said if I hadn't joined the union I'd got doctor's treatment for my baby," said the witness in a loud, clear voice.

Defense attorneys tried frantically to shake the witness' story, and to prove that no persons were refused treatment by company doctors. "I know it was refused to me," Isom maintained. Next move of the defense, as they could see the effect of this testimony on the jurors, was to make a motion for a mistrial, describing Isom's testimony as "inflammatory and calculated to inspire hatred in the jurors toward the defendants." This motion was denied.

The long procession of miners to the witness-stand found each of them with his story of persecution, intimidation and outright violence, coming from the bosses and their gunmen who acted as deputy sheriffs. Superintendents and foremen had their own means of discouraging workers from joining the union.

Tells of Discrimination

Lincoln Lowe told how, when he was straw boss for the Harlan Central Coal Company, the mine foreman gave him a slip with the names of four union men on it and told him to assign them to a place where the coal was so thin that a miner could not make a living.

Carey Hood, a Clover Fork miner, was assigned to a place where he would have to move 30 carloads of rock to get at one carload of coal. This assignment was given to him after he testified against a former employer in Frankfort.

The defense, who were to begin the introduction of direct evidence this week, have until this time contented themselves with attempts to blacken the reputations of the witnesses. Rather than attempt to refute the testimony concerning the terrorism practiced by the defendants, the attorneys for the corporations charge the union members with being drunkards and with keeping disorderly houses.

These frank appeals to the prejudices of the jurors, largely farmers from the surrounding country, are expected to be continued throughout the presentation of the case for the defendants.

aica, police killed four demonstrators and wounded fifty. Heavily armed reinforcements were concentrated in the district. Cane fields were fired on the Tate and Lyle sugar estate of St. Thomas Parish, where 1,400 laborers struck early in January. The authorities, in moving their armed forces into the rural strike areas, at times had to clear roads blocked by chopped-down telegraph poles.

The acting governor of Jamaica, in announcing a new back-to-the-land scheme devised by the government in the hope of mitigating unemployment—the unemployed have joined the strikers in many demonstrations—stated it would not be put into effect until labor conditions returned to "normal." He also warned that the administration "would not tolerate lawlessness and disorder."

Since May 1 ten workers have been killed and scores injured in police attacks on unarmed crowds of strikers.

defend him in court with the others or else be exposed before the anti-Fascist German-American workers' organizations which participated in the demonstration. The case was dismissed.

This week the Stalinists were again forced to recognize the S.W.P. as part of the anti-Fascist movement. Their delegates kept eloquently silent when the Trotskyists were invited to participate in the anti-Nazi committee preparing for a city-wide anti-Fascist conference scheduled to be held on June 8.