

A New Chapter Begins in American Labor History: Some Lessons of the Recent UMW Convention

By E. R. FRANK

The recently concluded convention of the United Mine Workers ushered in a new stage in the history of American labor and revealed once again that the CIO is the progressive wing of the trade union movement, because it is based on the workers of America's mass production industries.

After the smashing defeat of the "Little Steel" strike in the fall of 1937, the CIO lost the momentum of its splendid offensive and retreated slowly before the counter-attack of the employers. As the militancy of the workers cooled off after the first taste of defeat, the rear line trenches of the capitalist class opened fire. What they dared not attempt during the period of labor upsurge, they found the courage to do in the days of labor's retreat. The courts began harassing the labor movement with anti-union judicial legislation. The state legislatures regained their lost courage. Beginning with passage of oppressive labor legislation in Washington and Oregon, the reactionary wave swept eastward, until today almost three-fourths of the states have new tyrannical laws designed to cripple the labor unions.

UNION-BUSTING CAMPAIGN TAKEN UP BY FDR
In the past year, this union-busting campaign has been taken over by the federal government itself. The campaign against the WPA strikers and the infamous Thurman Arnold "Anti-trust law" indictments are but high-lights in the anti-union campaign launched by Roosevelt as a part of his feverish preparations for war.

The index of business activity stands today about 10% higher than in 1929. Ten million workers still remain unemployed without the possibility of being re-absorbed into private industry. This huge army constitutes an ever-present threat to the unions, menaces the wage standards of the employed workers, and hinders the progress of the labor movement. Partly because of these employment conditions, the unions have made no important advances during the past year. And in the labor movement, as in other great ventures, it is impossible to stand still. Either you move forward or you are ruthlessly pushed backwards.

LEWIS COULD NOT IGNORE THE PERMANENT CRISIS

Lewis chose to ignore the existence of this permanent economic crisis and its significance for the labor movement, at the CIO convention held in November at San Francisco. But Lewis could not afford to ignore these matters for long. He is not some Matthew Woll, who bases himself on the aristocratic Photo-Engravers and a million dollar insurance company. Lewis is the leader of the unions in the mass production industries: coal, steel, auto, rubber, glass, oil—the nerve centers of American economy.

These mass production workers are not experts in economics or statistics. They have not delved into reports of the Federal Reserve Bank or the Department of Labor. But they have seen with their own eyes production stepped up to the highest level of the last ten years and they know that, in spite of this, one third of the labor population still remains unemployed, and given present conditions, will always remain

unemployed. This industrial proletariat, employed in the huge plants, mills and factories of America, feels in its very bones how important and indispensable it is to the economic life of the country and it understands better than anyone else the full potentialities and latent strength inherent in the labor movement. These workers are determined to win economic security for themselves and their families and they are groping around and looking for the labor leaders who will show them the path to achieve this goal.

WHY LEWIS BROKE WITH ROOSEVELT

For the last two years, they have seen the courts and the legislatures attempt to hurl them back to the slavery of the open shop. They have further seen Roosevelt and the New Dealers, whom they considered to be labor's friends, take the lead in this reactionary open-shop campaign. The bitterness and hatred of this industrial proletariat is storing up and creating a powder keg of social dissatisfaction and revolt that will inevitably explode. Lewis Murray and their associates understand this fact. They know full well that they must adapt themselves to this mood, if they are to retain the leadership of the CIO. This is the explanation and the only explanation for Lewis's

dramatic break with Roosevelt. But where is Lewis going? Where is he leading the CIO? Lewis himself does not know. He is extremely bold in method and violent in speech, but very timid and hesitant in his policies. The indicated policy for the CIO is to break once and for all with all capitalist politics, correctly dubbed "company unionism" in the political field, and march forward onto the broad highways of an independent political party of labor, with an aggressive, fighting program for jobs and security. Such a policy would open up new vistas for the entire labor movement and would, by comparison, pale into insignificance the advances made by the CIO in its golden period from 1935 to 1937. But this step Lewis will not take. He does not have confidence in the independent strength of labor.

AFL-CIO SPLIT DOESN'T EXPLAIN WEAKNESS

Many bourgeois writers, commenting on the lack of progress of the American labor movement in the recent period, have ascribed this decline solely to the split in labor's ranks and the consequent warfare that ensued between the two labor factions. Is it true that the decline of two years can be ascribed solely or mainly to the split in labor's ranks? No! Of equal and even of greater importance is the policy of the labor movement. Labor is today marking time, first of all, because of the inadequate, conservative, class-collaboration policies of its leadership; the lack of a militant, realistic program to point the way for a genuine solution to the problems of unemployment, insecurity and the threatening war.

MINERS' CONFAB OCCUPIED WITH UNEMPLOYMENT

(Continued from Page 1)
the retreat for the past two years before the onslaughts of reaction and that the whole union structure of the CIO stands in jeopardy if this retreat is not halted.

OAKLAND DOLE PUTS THIRTEEN IN ONE ROOM
OAKLAND, California—Here are a few typical cases of people who exist on State Relief Administration in the state of California and County of Alameda:
(1) Family of thirteen have been living in a one-room barn in Russell City for over two months, and the relief social service is aware of this. The family is forced to sleep in this room in the following manner: mother and father in one bed, two oldest daughters in 1, two girls, 13 and 15, and a boy 5, sleep in another; two boys in another and two more in another; baby 2 yrs. old in a crib; baby 10 months in a crib; ALL SLEEP IN THIS ONE ROOM.

(2) Mother and five children have two beds for all of them. Mother and 2-month baby and son 8 years old sleep in 1 bed, two oldest daughters, 16 and 15, sleep in the other and daughter 12 years old has slept on the floor for the past year and the RELIEF IS AWARE OF THIS and has made no effort to remedy this situation, until the Federal Unemployed Union stepped into the case.

Attempted Forced Labor
The average family on relief in Alameda County is of Spanish-speaking extraction, and what a beating they take from the relief and country charities! The Federal Unemployed Union in the past six weeks has settled over 500 grievances and is carrying on a relentless struggle against the relief authorities who deprive clients of the necessities of life.

Much to Be Done
The workers, however, cannot by any means afford to rest on their laurels or be content merely to safeguard victories already won. In spite of the great achievements of the last three years, the sanitary facilities and health protection are still frequently non-existent or mere excuses for what they should be. The Chinese laundries have hardly been touched by unionization, and as long as this large section of the industry remains unorganized it constitutes a constant threat to the standards of the organized plants.

Where Stalinists Are
There is a great need of organization throughout the country of people on relief, WPA, and other forms of relief. Especially is this true in vicinities where the Communist-controlled Workers Alliance of America has sold out the workers who are in need of assistance. In Alameda County the majority of the former leadership of the WAA is now to be found in the relief stations seated behind the desks as case aides, etc.

Now Is Your Chance
On Sale for Two Weeks Only—February 1 to February 15
ANTI-DUHRING
by Engels
Regularly \$2.00
for only \$1.67
Clearance of pamphlets—Sat., Feb. 10: Wide Selection. Many rare ones—2c and up.

MODERN BOOKSHOP
27 UNIVERSITY PLACE
GRamercy 3-0917

in the recent period, have ascribed this decline solely to the split in labor's ranks and the consequent warfare that ensued between the two labor factions. Is it true that the decline of two years can be ascribed solely or mainly to the split in labor's ranks? No! Of equal and even of greater importance is the policy of the labor movement. Labor is today marking time, first of all, because of the inadequate, conservative, class-collaboration policies of its leadership; the lack of a militant, realistic program to point the way for a genuine solution to the problems of unemployment, insecurity and the threatening war.

For example, the AFL is today being subjected to an attack unprecedented in recent labor history, in the form of the "anti-trust" indictments, which threaten the very existence of numerous AFL Internationals. How is the AFL responding to this mortal threat? It is confining its resistance to the hiring of lawyers, the drawing up of briefs and the button-holing of individual politicians. A pitiable campaign! Is this poor resistance, perchance, to

Strike Begins at Toledo Gas Plant As Talks Fail

(Continued from Page 1)

By DOYLE CLARK
TOLEDO, Ohio, Feb. 1.—Failure of the Ohio Fuel Gas Co. to come to terms with the Gas and By-Products Workers local union No. 12024 resulted in a strike here early today. Negotiations had proceeded in vain until 5:30 a.m. this morning, when, as the Company officials showed no signs of yielding to the union demands of a 12 1/2 per cent wage increase, full seniority rights, closed shop, and a signed contract, the union membership voted unanimously to strike. The workers due to go on duty at 7:00 a.m. refused to enter the plants and the strike was in full swing.

Scabs Imported
With customary alacrity the company proceeded to import out-of-town scabs while with the same breath they launched an attack on the union for bringing in "outside elements" to help lead the strike. Offers of union men, thoroughly trained in gas-machine operation, to operate the plants at minimum production were turned down cold by the company which preferred to lower morale and wages by an importation of untrained and non-union links.

On all points which the union raised the company equivocated. They held out against the demand for an increase of 12 1/2 per cent, and very tentatively "agreed" to a possible 5 per cent

increase—provided the city council was able to adjust local gas rates in the company's favor.

Obviously the company was using the threat of strike as a club with which to force city politicians to raise rates. C. H. Fell, Vice President of the United Mine Workers, with which the strikers are affiliated, summed the situation up aptly when he remarked: "... the gas companies are attempting to use the union as a 'guinea pig.' We refuse to be a bat which the companies can hold over the City Council in order to get the rate they want."

Press Anti-Union

The Toledo Blade, a Hearst-Paul Block rag of the smallest sort, wrote up heavily biased stories on the situation heaping via implication abuse upon the union. A front page editorial also appeared in which it is pointed out that the gas company is a "PUBLIC" utility. The underhanded aim of the editors is evidently to mislead the readers into thinking that the utility is municipally owned. This is a vicious falsehood. The Ohio Fuel Gas Co. is a private enterprise which piles up a goodly profit each year and enables its owners to loil in limousines and mansions. In this struggle, as in all similar struggles it is not difficult to see on which side the police, press, radio, public opinion (official) are aligned.

It was the steadily mounting labor protest against the government's persecution of the Minneapolis unemployed that finally forced the administration to back down. This, combined with the fact 1940 is an election year.

Labor Warned Persecutors
The Minneapolis union movement, as far back as July 28th of last year, served public notice it meant to defend the strikers against the frame-ups even then being undertaken by the Department of Justice at Roosevelt's orders. On that day John Bosco, president of the Minneapolis Central Labor Union, speaking over the major radio stations of the state, warned that "We are determined to protect the legal rights of our members and defend them against any attempted frame-ups. . . . The fight for jobs at union wages and conditions, and for decent relief standards for those who have no jobs, did not begin or end with the WPA strike in Minneapolis."

Shortly after Roosevelt and Murphy proclaimed their intention to institute criminal proceedings against the WPA strikers, particularly in Minneapolis, protests began to emanate from unions throughout the country. On July 31, 1939, the Sailors Union of the Pacific adopted a resolution comparing the New Deal with "the typical raw deal that organized labor has always gotten from labor-hating bosses and politicians," and resolving: "That we protest the usurpation of dictatorial power implicit in the threats to prosecute workers for striking to defend their livelihood and declare that we will resist to the utmost any attempt at fascist regimentation of American labor. . . ."

BRITISH DECREE FORCED LABOR FOR NEGROES IN COLONIES

Forced labor is now in force in Nigeria, the Cameroons and other British colonies in Africa. The British Government has invoked the forced labor regulations instituted at the beginning of the second world war, the Baltimore Afro-American reports.

The regulations provide that able-bodied natives between the ages of 18 and 40 may be required to work as carriers or motor drivers to facilitate the movement of military forces or for the transport of arms, equipment or stores for the military forces.

In practice it means that the natives may be taken from their villages and used in any kind of work essential to carrying on the war. This includes farming, forestry, manufacturing, road construction and common labor.

ately an executive order to this effect.

The political program of the UMW, and in a sense of the CIO, remained hanging in mid-air. After a vigorous debate, the convention adopted the Lewis recommendations empowering the "International Executive Board to take 'appropriate action' and to render 'such reasonable financial support as circumstances may warrant at the proper time in support of the program that may be agreed upon and worked out in cooperation with Labor's Non-Partisan League."

The convention paid silent tribute in its last session to its working class heroes when all the delegates stood in silence in commemoration of the three union members killed last year by gunmen in "Bloody" Harlan County, Kentucky.

Indictments Quashed In Minneapolis Trials

(Continued from Page 1)
on a conspiracy charge, whereupon the judge gave him both the six months and the probation on the conspiracy charge.

On the motion of defense attorney Tom Davis that the execution of the sentences be delayed pending a possible appeal, the men were taken to the Hennepin County jail where they will remain until Monday or Tuesday.

Actually, it is doubtful if an appeal will be made, because of lack of funds. To bail out the seventeen would cost \$3,700 for bail bonds; to have the enormous transcript printed, another \$10,000. The judge estimated to a nicety just how heavy he could go on the sentences without provoking an insistent demand that the cases be appealed.

The fourteen women who were convicted, the judge announced, would appear before him Feb. 10 for sentencing, at which time the five who pled nolo contendere are also expected to appear.

Prisoners' Inspiring Meeting

Friday night in the Drivers Union Hall the indicted strikers met in an inspiring meeting. Max Goldman and Ed Palmquist spoke, explaining the meaning of the new developments. Charles Connors, only Negro among the defendants, rose and spoke of the brotherly way he had always been treated and the complete lack of racial prejudice. All pledged their abiding faith in the Federal Workers Section. The moving meeting was closed with the singing of "Solidarity."

Who Quashed Indictments?
Roosevelt's "amiable" intercession—that is the interpretation being circulated by the administration and its supporters—doesn't fool the millions of workers who know that it was Roosevelt himself who directed the vicious attack against the Minneapolis strikers, and that he has only been brought up short because of the tremendous outburst of protest from the labor movement.

It was the steadily mounting labor protest against the government's persecution of the Minneapolis unemployed that finally forced the administration to back down. This, combined with the fact 1940 is an election year.

Labor Warned Persecutors
The Minneapolis union movement, as far back as July 28th of last year, served public notice it meant to defend the strikers against the frame-ups even then being undertaken by the Department of Justice at Roosevelt's orders. On that day John Bosco, president of the Minneapolis Central Labor Union, speaking over the major radio stations of the state, warned that "We are determined to protect the legal rights of our members and defend them against any attempted frame-ups. . . . The fight for jobs at union wages and conditions, and for decent relief standards for those who have no jobs, did not begin or end with the WPA strike in Minneapolis."

Shortly after Roosevelt and Murphy proclaimed their intention to institute criminal proceedings against the WPA strikers, particularly in Minneapolis, protests began to emanate from unions throughout the country. On July 31, 1939, the Sailors Union of the Pacific adopted a resolution comparing the New Deal with "the typical raw deal that organized labor has always gotten from labor-hating bosses and politicians," and resolving: "That we protest the usurpation of dictatorial power implicit in the threats to prosecute workers for striking to defend their livelihood and declare that we will resist to the utmost any attempt at fascist regimentation of American labor. . . ."

Defense Organized

On August 22, when it was seen the Department of Justice was out to indict as many WPA strikers as possible, the Minneapolis labor movement set up its WPA Defense Committee, made

up of representatives from the Minneapolis Central Labor Union, the Building Trades Council, the Printing Trades Council, and the Teamsters Joint Council, and began raising funds to defend the strikers. It was this Defense Committee that carried the burden of the defense, and it did a magnificent job. One measure of the Herculean efforts put forth by labor is seen in the \$25,000 raised and expended by the Defense Committee.

Green Joined Defense
On September 4, President William Green of the AFL joined the defense movement by pledging the united support of the AFL to the persecuted Minneapolis WPA strikers. "It seems clear," stated Green, "that the prosecution of relief workers in Minneapolis is persecution. . . ."

"Working people everywhere protest against such a policy pursued by the government at a time when more than 10,000,000 are unemployed. It is bad enough for workers to suffer pain of unemployment. It is cruelty when the government adds to this suffering through persecution such as is being inflicted on workers in Minneapolis. . . ."

"The membership of the American Federation of Labor will extend to these persecuted people their sympathy and full measure of moral support. The work of the Minneapolis Central Labor Union in defending these persecuted workers is to be commended."

Federation Rebukes Roosevelt
The president and the secretary of the Minnesota State Federation of Labor added their protests to Green's, dispatching a wire to Murphy protesting against the persecution and the high bail. A few days later the State Federation of Labor held its 57th annual convention at which it adopted a stinging resolution condemning the Roosevelt administration for supporting the WPA wage cut, and endorsed the WPA Defense Committee.

Early in September the Minneapolis Labor Temple Association met and voted to pledge its \$78,000 property as surety for the strikers' bail bonds.

The St. Paul Trades & Labor Assembly in September set up a WPA Defense Committee patterned after the Minneapolis committee.

On October 6th and 7th, the WPA Defense Committee held a tag day in Minneapolis during which ten thousand persons donated over \$1,000 to the defense fund.

Unions throughout the nation have donated to the WPA Defense Committee. AFL and CIO unions and unemployed organizations have adopted resolutions of solidarity with the Minneapolis strikers.

In the middle of October the American Federation of Labor's executive council passed a resolution protesting against the federal courts for the persecution of the WPA strikers.

Pressure Wins Victory
Seeing that he could neither bluff nor coerce organized labor to back away from its declared solidarity with the indicted and convicted strikers, realizing that it is an election year and that soon the party he heads and the class he represents would have to present itself as best it could as a "friend of the unemployed," President Roosevelt made an about-face and decided to get out of the Minneapolis situation as gracefully as he could.

Such labor defense cases as that in Minneapolis will become more and more frequent the closer the ruling class pushes this nation towards war. In the days to come, it is worth remembering that the freeing of the Minneapolis strikers was the work of the unions of this city and this nation. So far as those who have been close to the hellish persecution of the Minneapolis strikers are concerned, all efforts of Roosevelt and his supporters to whitewash the New Deal in this case will be unavailing.

Sensational Offer!!

(for month of February)

THE CASE OF LEON TROTSKY, single copy . . .	\$2.25
LIVING THOUGHTS OF MARX, single copy85
FASCISM AND BIG BUSINESS, single copy75
WORLD REVOLUTION by C.L.R. James, single copy . . .	1.50
THE FOUR IN COMBINATION FOR	\$2.50
SPEECH by LEON TROTSKY—In English	\$6.00

A recording on two double-faced discs.

IN COMBINATION
WITH THE FOUR BOOKS LISTED ABOVE . . . \$7.50

PIONEER PUBLISHERS
116 UNIVERSITY PLACE NEW YORK, N. Y.