

WORKERS' FORUM

Write to us—tell us what's going on in your part of the labor movement—what are the workers thinking about?—tell us what the bosses are up to—and the G-men and the local cops—and the Stalinists—send us that story the capitalist press didn't print and that story they buried or distorted—our pages are open to you. Letters must carry name and address, but indicate if you do not want your name printed.

SWOC Convention Stifled by Surrender of Murray Leadership to War Drive

by MILLS

(Special to the Socialist Appeal) The second convention of the SWOC, May 14-17 in Chicago, can best be understood by outlining the background of the steel situation.

At the time the Steel Workers Organizing Committee entered the steel unionization drive, conditions in the industry were ripe for organization. This was especially true of the small plants throughout the country where working conditions were deplorable.

Wages were extremely low, and the boss was the supreme, undisputed ruler in the shop. Moreover, the work in small shops was of a character which required constant, intensive work without rest periods. The piece work system prevailed as the method of determining wages, and above all, the speed-up constantly oppressed the workers. Such conditions left an open field for any union which could challenge the authority and power of the boss.

For an organization with the backing of the United Mine Workers of America, the task of organizing these small plants was not a particularly difficult one. The SWOC had such backing, and it went forward to accomplish this task. In a short while, hundreds of these small plants were successfully organized, rates of

pay were substantially increased, and general working conditions were greatly improved. As a result, the workers in those plants began to look up to the leadership of the SWOC with great admiration and respect.

However, unions were a novelty to these workers. They had never seen them or participated in their formation; hence, the question of inner-union democracy was a small shop workers abstract matter which they could not understand. As far as they were concerned, anything the leadership did was for the best interest of the organization. To them, the leaders were almost infallible.

BIG STEEL PLANTS A DIFFERENT STORY

Among the workers in the large, integrated steel plants, the situation was entirely different. Here the success of the SWOC leadership fell far short of its claims and expectations. U.S. Steel recognized the union, it is true, but mainly because it wished to put itself in a better competitive position as against its competitors. The "Little Steel" strike was a smashing defeat for the SWOC, and in the few remaining large plants under contract, no major gains were made by the union. The lodges covering these plants find it extremely difficult to maintain even a semblance of a solid organization. Dues fluctuate continually, and many times reach a dangerously low point.

Meanwhile, the corporations maintain an aggressive attitude. They continue to discriminate against union men, they continue to reduce the workers' earnings by manipulating the piece work and tonnage bonus rates; and finally, they continue to boldly speed up production and increase the efficiency of their plants at the expense of the workers. Technological unemployment hovers over the head of every worker in a steel plant. And when a steel worker sums up all of these conditions, he begins to ask himself, "What is the Union doing about it?"

The leaders talked a great deal about organization drives, but these drives were seldom seen; and when they were begun, it was generally upon the initiative of the rank-and-file leaders who did all of the work. Campaigns were based upon such issues as the check-off system, and 100% unionization, and not upon the issues which daily torment the worker at the machine. As the conclusion of the campaigns, apathy again set in, and accordingly, dues payments began to decline.

When the workers from these plants came to the convention of the SWOC in Chicago, they were not quite so willing to support the leadership in every move. They had begun to develop serious doubts about the highly praised preachers of "industrial peace." The leaders were well aware of this development; they came to the convention prepared to meet it.

Taking advantage of the financial weakness of the small lodges, the SWOC officials recommended that several small lodges unite and send a local SWOC Field Or-

ganizer to the convention as a proxy delegate. This was done in numerous cases; and as a result, scores of Field Organizers came to Chicago as delegates, each one of them carrying several proxy votes. Since these men were appointed by the SWOC "tops," they dared not vote against the leaders for fear of losing their jobs. Thus, from the very beginning of the convention any opposition group was defeated by virtue of the fact that the organizers held practically enough votes to control the convention.

GANG UP ON REAL DELEGATES

Several of the lodges from larger plants had taken the leadership in the pre-convention agitation for establishing a genuine International union in steel with elected leaders and representatives. The SWOC leaders had long opposed the idea, but catching wind of the trend, they came to the convention with a proposal that a Constitutional Convention be called . . . in 1942. From the floor came a demand that such a convention be called by 1941. Murray defended the proposal of the officers, and then, one after another, the organizers and job-seeking stooges began to hurl slanders and insults at those who opposed the idea of waiting until 1942. Murray pictured the rank-and-file demand as a personal attack upon himself, and then proceeded to attack its supporters. Needless to say, in all this confusion, Murray had his way.

While the convention was in session, the imperialist war guns were booming over Europe, and Roosevelt was making his war budget appeal to Congress. In spite of this dangerous atmosphere, the SWOC leaders proposed to the convention the most reactionary war resolution yet presented to any leading CIO union. The entire resolution was clothed with patriotic phrases. The government was promised support "in any emergency"; "Our country, right or wrong" was the central slogan. Murray pointed out that the purpose of the resolution was to "show the American people that we are ready to support our government." What he meant was that he wanted to show American capitalism that the S.W.O.C. leadership could line up the steel workers behind the imperialist war machinery.

The popular referendum on war, which was endorsed by the 1937 convention, was not even mentioned in the 1940 resolution. From the floor came a request that the 1937 stand be reaffirmed, but it was promptly shelved.

Meanwhile, a Canadian delegate described the conditions of the Canadian workers under the war regime. He told of how civil rights were destroyed, while profits mounted into millions of dol-

Chicago Lodge of Republic Steel Still Think Kelly a Killer

Delegates from Republic Chicago Lodge walked out at the SWOC convention when Mayor Kelly rose to speak. They, who know him best, still remember him as the mayor responsible for the Memorial Day Massacre of 1937 during the "Little Steel" strike.

Chairman Murray had invited Kelly, made a long speech on his behalf, and Kelly spent his time explaining that he wasn't around when the cops shot the steel workers. (He didn't say anything about the way he arranged to whitewash the killers.)

But Murray's whitewash of Kelly didn't go with the Chicago delegates of the local to which the slain men had belonged. They left the hall while Kelly was there.

He advised the American delegation that the best thing that they could do about the war situation was to stay out of it. For that concluding statement he received a thunderous ovation. The leadership's desire to soothe the fears of American capital was discernible in every move that they made. This desire was most nakedly exposed when the question of unemployment came up. The Murray leadership proposed a conference of leaders of "Government, Business, Labor and the Farmers." Such a conference, they say, would discuss the problem of unemployment and come forth with some fruitful solution.

The six-hour day, which at present is the only demand which can really unite all steel workers—employed and unemployed—was hardly mentioned by the officials. However, this issue came up from the floor. Rank-and-file delegates put forth the six-hour day demand as their immediate answer to technological unemployment. Many delegates participated in the discussion, and while many of them spoke for a six-hour day, not a single one of them said anything about the conference proposed by the leadership.

All of them talked about the effect of the new automatic strip mills, about the speed-up, about the need of shortening the hours of work and spreading the jobs. Only the paid apostles of class collaboration had anything to say in favor of their proposal for a "conference on unemployment."

The steel workers have no desire to "confer" with the slave-drivers and war-mongers of American industry to learn how to meet the problem of unemployment. The workers know the road THE SIX-HOUR DAY WITH EIGHT HOURS' PAY! It will not come if everything is left up to the leadership; it will come only when the steel workers themselves prepare to fight for it. To this end, the militants who attended the convention in Chicago pledged themselves. Let the leaders have their conferences with the bosses; the steel workers themselves prefer fighting!

Appeal Drive Gains, But Not Enough

The collection this week for the two-a-week Appeal was an improvement over the previous week's collection. \$209.25 was collected, an increase of approximately \$70.00 over the money collected during the week before.

But, sorry to say, we cannot be satisfied. The attack of the GPU assassins on Comrade Trotsky shows us how much more effective we could be if the Appeal were published twice-a-week. Had we been publishing the Appeal twice-a-week we would have been out on the streets with the news and the interpretation of the attempted assassination by Stalin's GPU much earlier.

Comrades, let nothing interfere with the collection of funds for the two-a-week Appeal. Our financial condition is such that the two-a-week Appeal drive must continue regardless of any other drive.

Everybody on his toes to fulfill the quota!

SCOREBOARD

Table with columns: Branch, Pledged, Paid, %

Stalinists Fail to Draw Detroit Workers

Editor: Mother's Day, May 12, was the occasion for a "Peace Parade" here. The march was supported by several foreign groups of Communist Party origin, a few students—also C.P., plus Mazy's Briggs local and Dodge Local 3. That there were only two locals represented shows that the affair did not have the support of the International, and secondly that C.P. influence in the auto union movement is at its very lowest.

Briggs has been an anti-war local for some time now—Dodge No. 3 has C.P. and S.P. influence. They gave the march whatever life and workmen's spirit it had. The greater weight of the C.P. organizations whoever made it distinctly a petty-bourgeois outing. The march was a lagging, straggling, poorly organized flop. The paper estimated a crowd of 3,000—about right. Although there is a strong anti-war sentiment among the workers, this march did not draw them in. Detroit J. Darnell

St. Louis Spring Co. Workers Strike Again

Editor: Two weeks ago I wrote you that the St. Louis Spring Co. had a "stoppage."

Well, the boss agreed to give a raise and a week's vacation with pay. But the boss welched, so 124 production workers went on a strike on Thursday, May 16. This is Local 282, United Auto Workers. Ficketing is being conducted on a 24 hour schedule. Wages paid under the previous contract ranged from 30 to 55 cents an hour. Which of course is very low pay. The union is asking for a two and a half cents an hour increase this year and five cents an hour next year. But with the coming war, which will mean in-

creases in living costs, a little increase of two and one-half and five cents is going to put these workers at a loss, tied up with wages that low, when prices will rise 25% to 200%, and in some cases even higher.

Withdrawal of Leland Hanford Lamb of Flint, Michigan from a field of nine men for a new school superintendent for St. Louis came when both the AFL and CIO protested against Lamb because of Lamb's record in Flint. As school superintendent there he fired three teachers for aiding the shutdown strike in '37. The workers in Flint should welcome this news. The AFL and the CIO are getting in touch with central bodies of labor wherever the nominees come from and finding out what kind of record they have in regards to labor and then work pro and con. St. Louis, Mo. H.V.R.

Praises Appeal, But Defends Pacifists

Editor: I am glad you are determined in your anti-war stand and your efforts for the unemployed and for underpaid workers.

But you make a serious mistake in condemning the religious pacifists who also work for these same things. It is true that religion has often been used as "the opiate of the working people." But the religious pacifists are not guilty of that abuse. They are the most practical, realistic group of people in the world today. They do not condone the exploitation of workers in the guise of religion, or under any other circumstances. Baltimore, Md. John C. Paisley

(We'd like Brother Paisley to tell us what is practical and realistic about religious pacifism. How does it help organize the MASS struggle against WAR—which can only be the struggle to overthrow capitalism?—Editor.)

AKRON STRIKERS KEEP GENERAL TIRE TIED UP

AKRON, Ohio, May 26—Fourteen hundred rubber workers, the employees of the General Tire and Rubber Co., have been on strike since April 10. After 39 days on the picket line they are more determined to win than ever.

These workers, members of Local 9 of the United Rubber Workers of America (CIO) voted four to one to strike for: (1) The prevailing 6 hour day, 30 hour week, against an attempt by the company to introduce an 8 hour day, 40 hour week. This would have meant further layoffs in a town where thousands of rubber workers walk the streets unemployed. (2) Abolition of the vicious speed-up and for a return to the rates of pay as set down in the union contract. (3) Adjustment of grievances within a reasonable length of time.

Backed By All Labor The International executive Board of the URWA is supporting the strike, along with the CIO central body. The strikers also have the moral and material support of the AFL of Akron, the rubber center of the world.

A constant picket line of strikers, their families and sympathizers, and AFL and CIO workers, harass the few scabs and office workers who enter the plant. The scabs are protected by at least 100 Akron policemen. These cops have become increasingly brutal especially with the women, since the back-to-work movement attempted by their chief Rae Williams failed so miserably.

It is interesting to note that the majority of these cops are the recruits added to the force in the last two years. At that time the whole labor movement opposed the expansion of the police force, pointing out the many additional men would only be used as scab-herders.

The boss press shouted that they were needed to crush a rising crime wave they claimed was menacing the city. Now when traffic accidents are reaching a new high because of the lack of adequate patrol, all the cops are busy protecting scabs.

"General" meanwhile refuses to talk to the representatives of the striking workers until they give up the strike and go back to work. Why? In 1938 General Tire & Rubber Co. made two million dollars. They are preparing to make even greater profits, along with their competitor-allies—Goodrich, Goodyear, and Firestone, out of the war orders which are today trickling in, and tomorrow will be rushing in to Akron.

This refusal to negotiate on the part of General Tire, a relatively small company, can only be explained as part of the drive by big business everywhere against union conditions, as a preliminary to the M-Day plans—the war plans of American business which if unopposed mean the destruction of the workers' movement.

Stamp Plan Assailed by SWP Jersey Candidate for Senate

NEWARK, N. J.—George Breitman, Socialist Workers Party candidate for United States Senator, denounced the reactionary features of the "food stamp plan" as attempts to regiment the unemployed in preparation for America's entry in the War.

"Despite the publicity with which it was introduced by the local and federal politicians this month, the food stamp plan has been greeted with resentment against many of its features by ever increasing numbers of unemployed workers and their organizations," declared Breitman. "They found out quickly enough that it was no 50% increase in their food allowances. Up till now the unemployed had been receiving surplus commodities given out by the Federal Surplus Commodity Corporation in addition to their food checks at the local stations.

"In effect they will not receive more than a 25%-30% increase, instead of the promised 50%. As for the voluntary aspect of the thing: Since the old FSCC stations will be closed, everyone who does not "voluntarily" accept the food stamp plan will automatic-

ly receive a cut in his total food budget.

Used Against Cash Relief "In Newark, we know that this maneuver is intended to weaken the fight for cash relief, something Newark unemployed for almost five years have been fighting for. They are afraid that this "increase" will be used by the local politicians to prepare a cut in their relief, as was done in Minneapolis after the introduction of the plan.

"They resent new restrictions: the order making them carry an identification card every time they go to a store, the right of federal inspectors to stop them when they leave a store and search their bags, the restrictions on their right to purchase household materials such as soap, or tobacco.

Stand of Various Groups "This opposition to many features of the plan has already produced a strongly worded resolution from the Workers Relief & WPA Union, militant Newark unemployed organization, attacking the reactionary features of the plan, and calling upon the unemployed to organize to protect

themselves against the next stages in the development of the plan.

"On the other hand, the Stalinist-controlled shell of an organization, the Workers Alliance, last week issued a leaflet completely slurring over the dangerous features of the plan, saying to the unemployed: "This is your plan! Learn how it benefits you!" Thus they demonstrate that although they use a more militant sounding language than a year ago, they still follow a policy which betrays and confuses the unemployed and weakens their fight for jobs and adequate cash relief."

Breitman concluded by pointing out how ridiculous a role the Socialist Party was playing in the food stamp question. "Unemployed workers in New York at the recent convention of the Unemployed & Project Workers Union saw members of the Socialist Party voting in a bloc against the food stamp plan's introduction in New York City, at the same time that Harry Laidler, S.P. member of the City Council, had been the most active proponent in that body to bring the plan to New York City."

CLARKE SEES WARTIME OPEN SHOP TACTICS AT WORK IN SYRACUSE

By GEORGE CLARKE

SYRACUSE—This wide open-shop industrial center is all primed for big war-time production. General Motors, Crucible Steel, Solvay chemicals long ago "adapted" themselves to the "strain" of war.

War means open-shop wages. Syracuse anticipated this general condition by many years. A skilled tool and die maker in Brown, Lipe & Shapin (GM affiliate manufacturing steering gears, headlights, etc.) makes less than a dollar an hour tops. In the unionized plants of GM the same work calls for \$1.25 to \$1.40 an hour. Naturally, proportionately worse conditions obtain for the unskilled.

And while wages trail far behind unionized plants, and hours are long and working conditions bad, Syracuse workers already have the bad smell in their nostrils—the smell of the pre-war depression that will be the post-war panic.

The "Democracy" They Enjoy Over 9,000 families are on relief, according to Leon Abbott, county welfare commissioner. At least one out of every seven persons receive relief—which is a sure sign that at least one out of every six are unemployed.

These families, fortunate enough to be on the relief rolls, received \$6.32 on the weekly average. Estimating the families at an average of 4 persons, the relief cannot-fodder of Syracuse enjoy the princely sum of 90 cents a day for food, clothing, shelter, fuel and the other necessities of life. They will probably be branded "Fifth Column" if they don't get too hysterical about the MorgandunPout-Roosevelt war for "democracy," "civilization" and "the good life."

Not very long ago the local newspapers and the Chamber of Commerce were engaged in a big

crusade against "Bolshevism." The "Bolshevism" consisted of a low-cost housing project that succeeded in providing the tremendous number of 800 apartments. (There are almost 10,000 slum families in Syracuse.) But even this "wild-eyed Bolsheviki" project was not entirely unprofitable for the solid citizens of the community. It appears that the slums were cleared for the project in NOT the poorest section of the city. These homes—of course!—were heavily mortgaged to the local banks, who were not entirely unhappy to relieve themselves of this property, at nice fat interest charges.

Workers Are Militant With the exception of the militant truck drivers and a few of the minor trades, Syracuse is unorganized. There are a few weak SWOC lodges in the Crucible mills, a few of the smaller plants and mills under contract. And that's about the size of organization. But don't get the impression that Syracuse workers lack in militancy. For months on end the Remington-Rand workers battled as vicious a company terror as workers have seen anywhere. They didn't win—the labor movement was too weak and the company too powerful. But the real story is told in the fact that the only way Remington-Rand could defeat the workers was by closing down the plant.

"Hell will pop in this town one of these days," a worker told me, "and when it does we'll be fighting our own war where it should be fought."

The SWP is ready to move ahead in Syracuse. With several workers joining the party during my stay here, it is only a matter of time before an active, promising party organization is constituted.

GEORGE CLARKE IN TWIN CITIES ON COAST-TO-COAST TOUR

George Clarke, member of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, now on a coast-to-coast speaking tour, is in Minneapolis and St. Paul this week-end. Time and place of his speaking engagements can be ascertained at the Minneapolis headquarters of the Socialist Workers Party, 919 Marquette. His next speaking dates are:

Table with columns: City, Date