

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.

Bosses Are Training, What About Us?

As a follow-up to my letter on workers' military training which you printed several weeks ago, I am enclosing the following notice clipped from a local paper which will indicate the extent of the defense activity in the small towns. Similar official and unofficial meetings are being held throughout Connecticut and, I am sure, in most of the states in the Union. It's time the workers began to wake up and realize how fast the drive for militarizing the country is proceeding, and to discuss and decide what THEY must do in this situation.

Fraternally,
W. F. W.
BRIDGEPORT, Conn.

WARNING

The Legal Voters and Taxpayers of the Town of Redding are hereby notified and warned that a Special Town Meeting will be held at the Hill School in said Town of Redding on Saturday, July 13, 1940 at 8:30 P. M. DST, for the following purpose:

- (1) For the general purpose of discussing and formulating definite, sane, sound home defense plans including but not limited to the following:
 - (a) Home Guard
 - (b) Economic Defense (including men, women, children, machines, stock and land).
 - (c) Fingerprinting
 - (d) Redding "M" Day
 - (e) And thereupon to coordinate our home defense and begin immediate cooperation with the County, The State and the United States.
- (2) And to transact any other business right and proper to come before said meeting.

Dated at Redding, Conn., this 8th day of July, 1940.
S. HAROLD SAMUELSON
FRANK STOLLE
JOSEPH HUYBER
Selectmen of the Town of Redding.

A Letter From the Locked-Out Youth

Here is a note I received from a 24-year old boy that I know. He lost two fingers of each hand in an industrial accident, to make up for it was given some machine shop training. Somehow his note

seems to describe not only this boy, but the seven million youth who have come of age since 1930. He writes:
"I looked for work in my line all over Minneapolis and put my application in a number of the shops, but things were very slow and the relief department started sending the boys out to camp and Mr. Atkins at the relief was always asking when I was going to work. He said there was all kinds of work and there wasn't any. And then he held back my rent for the last month, and I had to keep calling up to get that. So I finally got tired of everything and started west for Seattle and I did not have a cent of money when I started. It was plenty tough going. But I finally got here. It took me seven days. I was all tired out. And now that it is all over I think I made a mistake leaving Minneapolis. Although there is a lot of work out here, there is also a lot of men out of work that live here. I was over to the Boeing airplane factory and put in my application but they have about ten thousand of them. There is a line up every morning about two blocks long. I don't think there will be much hiring done here until this fall and it was very hard getting by without a place to sleep or eat. So just a couple days ago I was for leaving Seattle. I was all tired out from losing sleep and missing a few meals, when I walked into a cafe and asked a woman for something to eat and told her what it was all about. So she offered to help me out for my meals and a place to sleep for a few weeks and in the meantime I might find something. And after that I don't know what. So that's all the news I have for now."
MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. G. C.

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Phil Murray, Steel Bosses, All Democrats -- Whose Voice Does Their Party Listen To?

By FARRELL DOBBS

Among those to answer roll call as a delegate to the Democratic Convention was Phillip Murray, CIO vice president and Chairman of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. His presence at the Chicago gathering is of more than passing interest to the CIO workers. Why was he there? What benefits did he hope to bring to the workers by his participation? Did he hope to find a broader solution to the problems of the steel workers whose plight he so eloquently described in his recent testimony before the Monopoly Committee of Congress?

To answer these questions one must first summarize his telling indictment of the steel trust.

MURRAY'S STORY OF THE STEEL TRUST

Last November and December industrial production in the nation as a whole surpassed the all-time peak in 1929, but with fewer workers. In the Pittsburgh industrial area production rose 6% from August 1929 to November 1939. But during this period men hours of working population of Pennsylvania was unemployed last December, the point when industrial production was higher than in 1929.

The cry of industry and of government for almost eight years has been "Give us greater productivity. Increase our efficiency. Lower the production costs of our commodities, and thereby create greater buying power and this will afford the cure for all the unemployment evils confronting the nation." Productivity has been increased; and labor's reward is a lower annual income, a shorter work year and more men thrown out in the streets. Corporation profits, on the other

hand, surmised the 1929 profits in the last quarter of 1939.

Growth of Monopoly

Factual investigations reveal that the trend in American industry today is toward greater monopolistic control. Technology is building a new monopoly in the steel industry. Eighteen steel companies went out of business in the 1930's through mergers and consolidations. Eight others merged but kept separate identities. Only two new companies were formed as the result of mergers. Fourteen plants or departments are now on the steel industry's death list. 22,950 workers employed in them will lose their jobs. Control of steel production is being concentrated into the hands of fewer and larger companies. Eighteen small independent companies operating hand mills will soon go. They employ 23,350 men.

Machines Replace Men

Modern automatic hot strip mills can handle most of the demand for flat rolled products, 126 men in the automatic mills produce the same tonnage as 4,512 men in the hand mills, a 97% re-

duction in man hours. The strip mills are displacing 84,770 men. 38,470 of them have already been disconnected from the industry. They are thrown out, not one by one, but a thousand to fifteen hundred at a time. In one case 3,000 workers were told to go home and not come back.

The continuous butt-weld type mill displaces 100 workers. Where 136 men are required for an operation in the hand mills only 36 are required in the continuous mills, a reduction of 75%.

Since 1923 the number of man hours per ton of steel output has declined 36%. A little more than 6 workers can turn out as much steel now as 10 could in 1923. Almost half of the decline has occurred since 1936 when labor displacement by strip mills began. From August 1936 to September 1939 technology reduced the number of man hours per ton of ingots produced from 18.7 to 14.7 man hours per ton. This is a reduction of more than 21%.

Steel Ghost Towns

Strip mills have reduced entire communities to ruin. Events during the last three years in Newcastle, Pennsylvania, a steel town of 50,000 people, are typical. 4,500 hand mill workers have been permanently displaced in this town. A few years earlier 1,200 Bessemer workers were displaced. There have been a total of 5,700 victims of technology in Newcastle during the 1930's. 64% of the town's population is either on relief or trying to get it. As the plight of Newcastle grew worse WPA wages were reduced \$5.00 a month and the number of WPA jobs cut more than 50%.

Unemployment Cancels Raises

Between August 1936 and September 1939 hourly wage rates in steel rose more than 27%, or from 66.8 to 85.1 cents per hour. The amount of wages per ton of ingots produced in August 1936 and September 1939 was the same, \$12.50 a ton. Despite a 27% increase in average hourly wages the total wages per ton of ingot produced did not increase. This is the result of a reduction of 21% in man hours per ton of ingots produced.

The claim that increased wage rates are responsible for technological improvement is not valid. All automatic strip mills were completed, under construction or authorized to be constructed before the steel wage raise in 1936 and 1937.

An insignificant number of steel workers are employed a full five-day week for 50 weeks a year. The average employed worker is idle 15 to 25 of the year. The bosses avoid hiring former hand mill workers in the strip mills. Those employed are given work as laborers or semi-skilled workers. They receive only one-half to one-third of their former daily earnings. The new steel technology is not creating new jobs elsewhere to compensate for jobs directly eliminated in the steel industry.

Workers Bear Burden

Technological improvements have been very profitable to the bosses and very costly to the workers. The same labor cost of production has been maintained despite an increase of more than one-fourth in hourly wage rates. Fourteen million dollars have been eliminated from the total monthly pay envelopes of the steel workers. Production efficiency has been raised by one-fifth. 30,000 workers have been displaced. Finished steel prices have increased 9%.

In other words, the industry produces the same amount of steel with 30,000 fewer workers. The employed workers are receiving more than 25% higher wages per hour but they are idle one-fifth to two-fifths of the year. 30,000 men have been displaced entirely and are getting no wages at all.

What Unionism Did

The SWOC Chairman supported this vivid description of conditions in the steel industry with verifiable statistics and instructive illustrations. He next turned to the role of the SWOC. If the steel workers had not organized, the situation would have been more serious. The SWOC has prevented, by increasing the hourly wage rate, a reduction of total monthly pay rolls by more than one-fourth. It has also, by reducing hours, prevented thus far the permanent elimination of 58,000 steel workers from their jobs. If it were not for the SWOC there would today be 88,000 instead of 30,000 steel workers thrown out in the street.

Murray recognizes that important as the union has been it has fallen short of a complete solution of the steel workers' problems. He goes on to say, "Having

won an increase of fourteen and one-half million dollars in total monthly payrolls, however, the SWOC has been helpless to prevent the steel industry from taking it away through technological improvements."

Congressional Action Needed

Pointing out that collective bargaining in the steel industry is on a company-wide basis, while the problems of technological improvement are industry wide and national in character, the CIO spokesman concludes: "Consequently, in the absence of universal collective bargaining, Congressional regulation of the introduction of large technological changes is necessary."

POLITICAL ACTION NEEDED — BUT AGAINST THE BOSSES

Murray recognizes that the steel workers must supplement trade union action with political action if they are to find a solution to their problems. But why does he turn to the Democratic Party? They will give lip service but they will not act. The Democratic Party, just as the Republican Party, is a political organization of the steel bosses, not of the steel workers.

One of Murray's fellow delegates at the convention was Mayor Kelly of Chicago whose police carried out the Memorial Day massacre of the strikers in Little Steel. In the Ohio delegation at the men who called out the National Guard to help the steel bosses in the same strike. Roosevelt, to whose

renomination Murray was pledged, has been in the White House during these very years in which the steel bosses were grinding the workers down under the heel of technological change.

The SWOC Chairman told the Monopoly Committee that there should be a national unemployment conference of leaders of government, industry, labor and farm groups. The Democrats put it in their platform. Platform promises, however, are taken lightly by the Democrats and the Republicans. The conference may never be held. If it is held it will wind up in a discussion of how to keep down labor trouble "in the interests of national defense," and not in any clear-cut program to aid the unemployed and underpaid workers.

The corporations are interested in only one thing: profit. As in the past so it will be in the future; the Democratic and Republican politicians will do the bidding of the corporations. Murray and all other labor leaders who support them are very popular with the Democrats and Republicans just before elections. When the election is over the bosses get the benefit of political representation and the workers get a few crumbs at best, sometimes tear gas and bullets.

"I say to the leaders of industry," Murray told the Monopoly Committee, "keep your economic theories in text books. So far as the workers of this great nation

are concerned, they want to know only one thing. When do they get jobs? When are they going to be protected from losing their jobs everytime a newconcraption or a new invention is discovered. When are their children, the youth of this nation, who are roaming the streets today, going to get jobs? This is the question. This is the big problem of today."

FOR AN INDEPENDENT LABOR PARTY

He is one thousand percent correct, but the workers won't get action on this vital problem from the Democrats or the Republicans. Nor will they get results through a third party of employer-loyal Senator Wheeler as John L. Lewis would have had the CIO membership believe.

The acute problems of the steel workers which Phillip Murray has so eloquently described can no longer be solved by trade union action alone. Unions the workers must have. They are an indispensable instrument. Working class political action is today equally indispensable.

The workers can depend upon no one except those of their own class. The next step toward the solution of their problems must be the election of candidates to political office—local, state and national—from the workers' own ranks by the workers' own political party. An independent labor party based on the trade unions must be formed.

'Worst Repressions in 20 Yrs' Says Civil Liberties Union

Repressions against working men and women in the United States have become so intensified since the war that the American Civil Liberties Union, in its yearly report just out, declares that "At no period in the twenty years of its existence have the Civil Liberties Union and other agencies engaged with protecting civil rights been confronted with such an array of threatened measures of repression. Added to the federal measures are local enactments and orders, mob violence, and hasty formation of citizens' committees dedicated to stamping out 'subversive' influences."

The latest report of the Civil Liberties Union entitled "In the Shadow of War", is in sharp contrast with the one issued last year, praising the administration to the skies.

This smug, bourgeois committee failed completely to realize that the "liberal" Roosevelt administration was systematically preparing and enacting legislation and empowering federal agencies to hound the labor movement. Today, the A. C. L. U. is ready to admit that "it is impossible to foretell in a period of such tension and change how far repression will go. But it seems certain that the drive for vast national defence with the likelihood of military conscription will weaken the defences of democracy and imperil not only the liberties of minorities but of all citizens generally."

"ON THE ONE HAND AND ON THE OTHER..."

Despite the dark outlook the Civil Liberties Union makes a rather pathetic attempt to find praise as well as blame for the government and its agencies. Its annual report contains a "Balance Sheet of Civil Liberties" which begins—to help liberal hopes spring eternal in the human breast, no doubt—with a section entitled "We commend". That contains 24 items. It is followed by "We condemn", containing 25 items. Then "We regret", four items. By this liberal mathematics the government is not so bad, after all!

Leaving aside this absurdity, the 72-page annual report is extremely useful as a picture of the developing use of repressive measures by the War Deal. It is useful, however, only in those fields in which the government quite openly assaults rights which even capitalism has traditionally conceded to be civil liberties: the right of asylum, of minority parties in elections, etc. Where, however, the assault against workers' rights is camouflaged as prosecution of violence in a strike, for example, the Civil Liberties Union does not define that as a violation of civil liberties!

Thus the most outstanding case of governmental assault on the right to strike and petition for grievance that occurred in the last year, the famous Min-

neapolis WPA prosecutions, the Civil Liberties Union report says: "The (Civil Liberties) Union did not get into the case until its later stages because of the charges of violence on the picket line. It became evident, however, that these minor charges did not justify a federal indictment for conspiracy and the Union joined with others in urging the dismissal of the remaining indictments."

In other words, "mere" indictments under trumped-up charges of violence on the picket line would not alone have been enough to have the Civil Liberties Union say a word on behalf of the WPA prisoners!

FIGURE THIS ONE OUT, IF YOU CAN
A really ludicrous example of this "civil liberties" mentality is the report's comment on the

"passport fraud" and other prosecutions directed against the Communist Party. These, says the report, were "not directly within the field of civil liberties". The Union says it found the charge that political prejudice was in back of these prosecutions to be "unsupported".

What would these gentlemen want? An affidavit from the judge swearing he was motivated by political prejudice? However, the Union does concede that it found "violations of civil rights incidental to the prosecutions—excessive bail, unfair delays in bringing cases to trial, appeals to public prejudice, and unwarranted sentences." All this, note, is incidental!

God help the labor movement if our rights in the coming period were to depend on the aid of these hair-splitters!

Soviet Ship Watched For Assaults Of Trotsky

MEXICO CITY, July 23—A strict watch is being kept by Mexican authorities over the Soviet freighter, Sevskis, now anchored in the Port of Manzanillo. It is believed that the ship arrived at that port as a means of escape for David Alfaro Siqueiros, his two brothers-in-law, Luis and Leopoldo Arenal, and other persons wanted by the police for the attempted assassination of Leon Trotsky and the murder of his secretary, Robert Sheldon Harte.

The ship ostensibly arrived to load metals for Vladivostok, but when authorities noted that there were no signs of activity aboard, they became suspicious that the ship was waiting to embark the GPU band. Siqueiros and his associates have been reported seen at various points, but have eluded all efforts to apprehend them.

Meanwhile the evidence against the assassins is continuing to accumulate. The latest of those implicated who has given a declaration to the interrogating judge is Jose Alvarez Lopez, a veteran of the Spanish civil war, who

was hired by Siqueiros as his personal chauffeur some time before the attempt to murder Trotsky.

Lopez Verifies Details

Lopez on Saturday told the judge the detailed story of Siqueiros' activities up to and including the attack on Trotsky's house. His story brought in Ana Lopez and Julia Barradas de Serrano, the two women spies assigned to corrupt the police guarding Trotsky's house; every night at eight Siqueiros met them to hear their report. Visits to the "French Jew", previously identified as the foreign agent of the GPU in charge of planning the assault; visits to the house where Harte's body was later found; and the story of the gathering of the assailants, their bringing of the machine guns and other weapons used, were described in detail by Lopez.

His makes the ninth declaration to the interrogating judge which names many of those who actually participated in the attack. Three other chauffeurs used that night, the two women spies, and Nestor Sanchez Hernandez who was one of the assailants disguised in police uniform, are among those who have "come clean."

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