

Just Remember The War Labor Boards Of 1917

By MICHAEL CORT

War labor boards? Well, we've had them before. William Green and Phillip Murray aren't the first to "demand" such boards. Samuel Gompers, first President of the American Federation of Labor, not only demanded but received such boards during the first world war. Those boards were used to lead the workers around by the nose for an entire decade. Let's look at those boards and see just how they contributed to making the "world safe for democracy" twenty-two years ago, before Green, Murray and Hillman succeed in fastening the ring in labor's nose this time.

The National War Labor Board, with jurisdiction over all disputes arising in fields of production necessary for the conduct of the war, was established by President Wilson in March, 1918. But that was only the second act in a three act tragedy that opened in the Spring of 1917 with Gompers' capitulation to the War Department, and ended with the anti-strike legislation of 1920.

So, our story really opens in the Spring of 1917. At that time the War Department, through its war production contracts, was the dominant factor in the industrial and labor scene. Its functions and activities in the field of labor included adjustments of disputes, fixing of wages and hours, and direct action on housing and the cost of living. There was no aspect of the labor problem which it did not enter; the War Department was in the process of becoming the largest single entrepreneur in America. Just as today.

In the Spring of 1917 the War Department let contracts for the construction of 16 army cantonments throughout the country, and set completion deadlines that were all but impossible to meet. Under cover of "national defense," the contractors came into head on collision with the unions by stretching hours to 10 and 12 per day, cutting wages on unskilled labor to 30 cents and skilled labor to 45 and 50 cents, and filling the jobs with scabs and flunks when ever union men protested. Enter Mr. Gompers.

Gompers Gets What He Wants

Samuel Gompers walked onto the scene with his mouth full of phrases about saving Democracy by blood and the sword, and pledged labor to this crusade. "What labor desires," he said, "is that it have a voice on any board set up by the government to deal with labor and war production." Wilson recognized Gompers' proposal as an easy way of dealing with labor. If Gompers wanted a few pats on the head... fine. If his ego required easy access to the office of the President of the United States... better yet. If his soul yearned for labor boards... excellent. Labor, bound and delivered, was cheap at twice that price.

In June, 1917, Gompers appointed John R. Alpine, vice-president of the AFL, as labor's representative on a three-man labor board set up by the War Department. The other two men on the board were appointed by the Secretary of War. This board was to have jurisdiction over the 500,000 workers employed under War Department contracts. Its decisions were binding and there was no appeal.

Thus Gompers calmly gambled labor's destiny in a game where the cards were stacked against him two to one. As it turned out, the cards might just as well have all been in the bosses' hands, for the majority of the board decisions were by unanimous vote. Alpine's servility was such that, according to War Department records, seldom did *both* of the boss representatives attend the sessions. They were so certain of Al-

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ON THE WAR FRONTS

by GEORGE STERN

From all indications the military time-table of the war is not going to wait upon the seasons this year. The British appear to expect the postponed Nazi invasion sometime in February. Meanwhile either for purposes of a grandiose feint or because he is actually contemplating a totally different strategy, Hitler is moving considerable forces southward, through Hungary into Rumania.

In anticipation of either of these moves or of both, Roosevelt's speech last Sunday served notice on the Axis that U. S. "non-belligerency" was moving rapidly into a more active phase. In shrewd, deceptive language, Roosevelt launched an attack on the Nazis that was worth a dozen bombing raids to the British.

Meanwhile, however, Europe is being covered over with that fog of rumor and speculation which we have come to associate with the Nazi method of preparing military moves.

First of all, it is a notable fact that all the reports of the German troop movements southeastward have come from German-controlled places—mainly Budapest. In place of the normal secrecy that would accompany such movements, these have been surrounded with ostentatious public notice. The Hungarian railway authorities announced revision of train schedules to accommodate the German troops and material. In Rumania, likewise entirely under German control, arrival of these forces has been acknowledged.

Only after their arrival in Rumania has the cloak of real military secrecy descended upon them. All kinds of inspired reports speak of German troop dispositions along the Bessarabian Frontier. Stalin's gingerly-held southwestern outpost. Others re-

fer to preparations for German action against Greece via Bulgaria. Still others regard the forces mainly as forces for occupation of Rumania. Their actual numbers have ranged in these reports from 60,000 to 600,000.

Even if the latter figure is correct and even if all three of the reported purposes of their movement were more or less accurately reported, it still would not mean that Hitler is not concentrating his main forces along the Channel for an invasion of Britain.

Certainly there is every reason to expect that Hitler plans this Spring—and early this Spring—to attempt reduction of the British Isles. Hitler knows that Roosevelt's threats are by no means empty but that they will take time, precious time, to carry out. Before U. S. aid to Britain can assume sufficient proportions to tip the scales of aerial predominance, Hitler will certainly stake his present superiority on a single, gigantic drive.

American aid to Britain cannot assume decisive proportions this spring and summer. And precisely this spring and summer will witness collisions of decisive importance. Bourgeois military experts appear in general to have shifted their views on the chances of a successful Nazi invasion of England. They now believe Britain can withstand it. The Kremlin's military specialists appear to share this belief. Before, long before another New Year rolls around, events should have provided the answer.

Whatever the outcome, the battle will only have been another in a long and widening series yet to come. It will decide nothing final, that decision rests ahead, and rests with the victimized peoples of the earth.

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AUTO UNION ISSUES CALL FOR GENERAL MOTORS CONFERENCE

Grace Carlson In Chicago, Flint, Detroit This Week

Grace Carlson's national tour includes the following lectures during this coming week:

CHICAGO: "Roosevelt vs. Hitler—The Struggle for Empire in Latin America." Hamilton Hotel, 18 South Dearborn St. Friday, January 3, 8 p.m.

FLINT, Mich.: "The Right To Life." Carpenters Hall, Pengeley Building, Tuesday, January 7, 8 p.m.

DETROIT: "War By Spring?" Arcadia Building, 3513 Woodward Avenue (Hall 5). Thursday, January 9, 8 p.m.

(See complete schedule of Comrade Carlson's tour, on page 2 of this issue.)

Labor Defends Ousted Minn. Educator

Red-Baiters Attack His '35 Appointment Of Grace Carlson

ST. PAUL, Dec. 27—Grace Carlson, candidate for U. S. Senator from Minnesota on the Trotskyite Anti-War Party ticket during the last elections, became the storm center of the ouster proceedings initiated by the reactionary state administration against John G. Rockwell, suspended state commissioner of education.

During a hearing on Rockwell's suspension held by the State Board of Education yesterday before a crowd of 350 people in the State Office building auditorium, M. Todd Evans, assistant attorney-general representing the state board, quickly turned the inquiry into an investigation of Rockwell's appointment of Dr. Carlson in 1935 to a post in the state educational department.

Comrade Carlson recently resigned the post to take up full-time work for the Socialist Workers Party.

Evans opened the attack with a question as to whether Rockwell knew that Grace Carlson had attended a "Socialist" meeting in New York.

"Yes," answered Rockwell. "I knew she was going to a Socialist meeting."

When Evans appeared to be planning to open another line of questioning, Rockwell wheeled on him and demanded:

"Why don't you go ahead with that? I would like to see some semblance of procedure."

Evans returned to this line of questioning, asking whether Rockwell had recommended Dr. Carlson's appointment.

Rockwell answered that he had, and described her as "the most superior and capable employe in the department."

Top Leaders Of Auto Union Hemmed In From Two Sides

While UAW Board Honeymoons With "Defense" Commission, Bosses Make Hay, And Workers Press Board For Action

By JOHN ADAMSON

DETROIT—Much to the embarrassment of its leadership, the United Automobile Workers of America is beginning to play the most important role of any of the CIO unions in the unfolding "national defense" program. Like the top officialdom of the CIO, the UAW Executive Board is growing uncomfortable under the conflicting pressures of the Morgan-DuPont "Defense Commission" whose war program it supports and of the automobile workers, whose union the war program undermines.

Against its own wishes the UAW leadership stands today at the head of the two biggest labor organization drives: Ford and the aircraft industry.

The Ford drive, tossed and bandied about for over two years, was finally crusted on the UAW leaders by an indignant membership.

The drive in the aircraft industry, officially launched almost a year ago, has been vegetating all this period. But the Vultee strike changed all of that. It came like a flash on the scene and in one day accomplished more than the union officials had accomplished in one year. From coast to coast the aroused aircraft workers, inspired by the example of the Vultee men, are demanding union organization.

These organization campaigns face today more formidable opposition than even the General Motors workers or the workers of "Little Steel" encountered three years ago. We are living in a war period. Besides the ordinary hazards of union organization when challenging industrial giants, these drives, if pushed to the very end, lead to a direct head-on collision between the union and the entire Roosevelt war machine. The Vultee strike, involving one of the smaller and less important aviation companies, gave labor grim warning of this ominous condition.

And it is not only a question of organizing the unorganized workers and raising the present standards. Like beasts of prey, the manufacturers are in full cry against the present conditions: the 40-hour week, the right to strike, etc. The manufacturers' campaign to house-break the labor movement is hitting on all eight cylinders.

The UAW Executive Board feels

NEW CAFETERIA LOCAL OFFICERS ARE INDUCTED

Leaders Of United
Ticket Pledge To
Carry Out Program

New York's Cafeteria Workers, Local 302 of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers (AFL), appropriately celebrated the holiday season Monday night, when they inducted into office the united front slate which made a clean sweep in the local's election recently.

In victorious mood, the crowd of union members which packed Palm Gardens celebrated the defeat of the red-baiting right wing. Their high spirits produced some unexpected and amusing results, as when they vigorously booed the "impartial arbitrator," Ben Golden, who was an invited guest. One of the planks in the united front slate's program was a pledge to hold a referendum of the membership on the abolition of the arbitration set-up. The celebrants made clear how they were going to vote!

The four speakers of the evening were the General Officers: just elected: Costas Dritsas, President (United Rank and File Club); Sam Kramberg (same group), Secretary-Treasurer; Larry Phillips, General Organizer (United Progressive Group); and Juan Aviles, Labor Chief (United Spanish Workers Club).

Dritsas struck the keynote when he spoke of the fight for a better contract for the 10,000 members of the union. The present contract expires in April.

Kramberg declared that the victory of the United Union Ticket showed that the workers were prepared to struggle in defense of their rights, even in these days of "national defense" ballyhoo. "Labor will never give up the right to strike," he said.

Juan Aviles declared that he realized his responsibility to do all that can be done to aid the unemployed by equitable distribution of jobs.

Larry Phillips began his speech by honoring those foreign-born militants, who justly belonged on the platform as elected officers, but had been deprived of the right to run for election by a technicality which ruled them out because they were non-citizens.

Phillips laid special emphasis on the task of the union in raising the wages of the miscellaneous (unskilled) workers in the April contract. The militant tradition of Local 302 was certain to produce rousing shop struggles for a decent contract.

Local 302 could now struggle as never before, Phillips pointed out, for the new officers had been elected on a program seeking the abolition of the artificial division of the union in separate branches—a division deliberately created by the racketeers to keep the new members in the chain cafeterias separated from the old militants in the independent stores. Now the members could really join hands for common struggle against the bosses.

It was clear from the speeches and the splendid morale of the audience that the bosses are in for a fight when the new contract negotiations begin.

Follows Demand Of Flint Locals

Conference Will Convene In February;
May Initiate A New, Militant Policy

FLINT, Mich., Dec. 28—Repeated pressure from the ranks of the Flint auto workers, who refused to accept the decision of the GM Council and Walter Reuther denying a request for a General Motors conference of the UAW, has forced the International Executive Board to reconsider its position and to grant the membership its demand. A GM conference will be held the first week in February.

Members of the leading bodies of all Flint locals of the UAW attended the International Executive Board meeting last week in Cleveland, and insisted that they grant the conference as a democratic means of thrashing out the many problems now facing the GM workers, and to find a way out of the present impasse. These officers refused to accept the offer of the Reuther-Thomas-Addes-Frankensteen leadership to hold a conference based on representation only from local union officers. They insisted on a delegated conference based on per capita, and this also was forced through the Executive Board meeting.

The February conference should give the progressive militants in the GM locals a good opportunity to voice a demand for a policy of militant action against the ultra-respectable policy of Walter Reuther, who is so busy playing the role of Knudsen's "little helper" in an attempt to land himself a job in the defense set-up, that he can't find time to fight for union conditions in GM.

WHY BOARD ACTED

The International Board as is well known, is split into two cliques. On the one hand there is the Reuther-Thomas group, which is loyal to Hillman and Roosevelt, and on the other hand there is the Addes-Frankensteen clique, which thus far has followed a policy dictated by John L. Lewis and is definitely leaning on Communist Party support. Both groups voted for the infamous "outlaw strike" policy, and both groups were instrumental in putting over the miserable sacrifice of the 17 militants in the Flint Fisher 1 lockout several weeks ago.

On the question of the GM conference, however, the Addes-Frankensteen group saw an opportunity to get at Walter Reuther, and therefore supported the demands of the Flint locals for a conference.

The truth is, however, that neither of these cliques have offered a program of action. They will attempt to use the conference for their own clique interests. At the least sign that the rank and file is getting up on its hind legs and heading for militant action, these clique bureaucrats will unite against the rank and file.

Progressive unionists are preparing, in addition, to voice questions at the conference concerning union policy in general. Especially important will be the question of the action of the Executive Board in the Fisher Body 1 dispute with the company, in which the Board, represented by Reuther, Thomas, Frankensteen, and Addes, agreed to a vicious solution with the company which forced four key militants out of the plant, took away their seniority, and applied extreme penalties on all the other men involved in the dispute.

There will undoubtedly be demands to oust Walter Reuther as GM director of the UAW. Frankensteen and Addes will, of course, look favorably on this for factional reasons. Progressive unionists will have no hesitation in bouncing Reuther if possible, but for other reasons. To them Reuther represents the cowardly policy of inaction which has typified the whole board during the last year and more.

Whether Reuther is ousted or not, the rank and file delegates at the conference are determined to throw out his policy.

(The text of the resolution adopted by UAW Local No. 581, Fisher Body, appears on page 2 of this issue.)

Hillman Groggy In 2nd Round

By OUR SPORTS EDITOR

A short hard-travelling body blow had Sidney Hillman, so-called "labor representative" on the Defense Commission, hanging on the ropes at the end of the second round of Hillman's non-title bout with the War Department over the awarding of war orders to labor law violators.

Our readers will recall that, in the first round, "Canvasback" Hillman peddled the bike all over the ring, keeping well out of the way while billions of war orders DuPont, and other open-shop Wagner Act violators, including a \$123,000,000 contract to Ford.

When the second round opened, however, Hillman appeared nettled by the taunts of the ring-side labor spectators, who kept yelling: "Stand still and fight, you bum!" Hillman therefore attempted to carry the fight in the second round, opening with a light left tap to the face: a pro-let to the War Department against a new Ford contract for \$1,367,500.

Influriated by the temerity of its opponent, the War Department opened up with a volley of right hooks that drove "Canvasback" to the ropes. The final mighty belt, which had Hillman laying half out of the ring, was the following announcement of

the War Department, issued December 27:

"After careful consideration of the protest against the award previously made to the Ford Motor Company of a contract for the production of 1,500 light reconnaissance cars, the War Department announced today that the award would be allowed to stand."

While his handlers were working frantically to revive the semi-conscious Hillman in preparation for the third round, he was heard to murmur through puffed-up lips: "Don't that guy know this fight's supposed to be fixed?"

Hillman looks in bad shape. Betcha his seconds throw in the towel. Well he was only a set-up for the War Department, from the start.