

Omaha Truckmen In Key Battle Against Bosses

Cannon Sees a Gain For Whole Country

By JAMES P. CANNON
National Secretary, S.W.P.
MINNEAPOLIS—As the Omaha teamsters' strike goes into its nineteenth week, and it becomes apparent that this extraordinarily long struggle will soon culminate in a victory for the workers, it is in point to describe the national significance of this great fight.

That the strike was limited to the area around Omaha—roughly including Lincoln and Sioux City, Iowa—is itself a remarkable fact and a tribute to the generalship provided by the North Central Area Negotiating Committee of the teamsters. This committee, backed by the teamsters unions in eleven states, has brilliantly conducted a general campaign which has established uniform minimum conditions under a signed closed-shop contract for some 300,000 highway drivers in the 11-state area.

An Iron Ring

Bold action drove the bosses into line so that the one strike which has had to be conducted in being waged under conditions favorable to the workers. The strike area is entirely surrounded by unionized terminals which do not handle scab-transported goods, and the strikers are fighting with the financial backing of their brothers throughout the area and with funds provided by the International.

Victory in Omaha means final assurance that the 11-state uniform contract is a permanent achievement. Meanwhile the area covered is already growing; the essential elements of the contract have now been applied to the main sections of Texas and Oklahoma, thereby creating an enormous wedge for all unions into the deep South. As the movement grows in strength, it secures superior conditions; the last regional contract signed, covering Detroit, secured the best advances as yet made.

It is already taken for granted in the Teamsters International that what began as a modest five-state venture some two years ago in Minneapolis (the old North Central Drivers Council) and blossomed a year ago into an 11-state set-up, will shortly extend to the rest of the country.

Composition Changed

In the process, the actual composition of the teamsters' movement has undergone a profound change. It is already no longer a movement based on drivers-salesmen (milk, bread, ice, laundry), but a really proletarian movement of transport drivers and warehousemen, and will become so increasingly. This signifies that the Teamsters International, already with some 500,000 members, the largest single union in the country and rapidly growing, will by its significant social composition play a role even greater than that indicated by its sheer numbers.

Tobin's break with his old colleagues at the A.F.L. convention was a reflection of this process. The teamsters' movement is undoubtedly scheduled to play a major role in the progressive unification of the labor movement. The contrast between its growth—under conditions of scope given to fresh and vital forces within it and coupled with a policy of amicable relations with the C.I.O. mass unions—and the ossification of the die-hard unions like Wharton's machinists and Frey's moulders, is a real sign of the times. Far from strengthening the old A.F.L.'s discredited program, the onward march of the teamsters is hastening the victory of industrial unionism.

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More Die in Firetraps as Boss Politicians Make Promises

By GRACE SAUNDERS
Two fires broke out in a tenement building at 210 West 103d Street, New York City, shortly before dawn on January 5, one on the first floor and one on the third floor. Scores of inhabitants of the building awoke from sleep with the acrid smell of smoke in their nostrils and the horrifying sound of burning, crackling timbers in their ears.

Condemned Firetrap

The building that was razed was one of the "old law tenement buildings," condemned by the authorities as unsafe for human habitation. Yet scores of people were living in it, and four people died in it. The building was operated, commented a city official, in "violation of the law."

Week after week the dreary reports of loss of life from fires in tumbled-down tenements recur monotonously in the press. So commonplace have they become that only occasionally when the papers are short of news, an arson angle can be exploited, or loss of life and property rises to spectacular heights are they accorded more than brief perfunctory mention.

Yet the causes of these fires are known, and in the majority of cases they could be avoided or at least kept under control. But the authorities have become callous, and nothing is done.

What the City Does

Faced with this problem, what does the city do? Take upon itself the task of repairing the old-law tenements to conform with the Multiple Dwelling Law, charging the costs to the landlords

where they rightly belong? A law, known as the Prior Lien Statute, designed to enable the city to act thus, the costs to constitute a charge against the property ahead of mortgages and all other liens except taxes was opposed by "three large savings banks"—Mayor LaGuardia is careful not to divulge their names—and their opposition was backed by the courts which held the bill a violation of both State and Federal Constitutions.

Alternatively the city might condemn and close the buildings which are such a hazard to health and life. But, and here we come to the nub of the situation and a fact which even the genial mayor is willing to admit: "there is no place for these tenants to move if the buildings are demolished."

The mayor is outraged by this latest in a long series of avoidable catastrophes, and thunderously proclaims that at long last he is going to try to solve the problem. He is going to petition the State Legislature to amend the existing law to permit and require the city to publicize the names of the owners and mortgagees of the unsafe old-law tenements so that "everybody may see" and then "we will show you the respectability of some of the owners of these firetraps."

And then, after we have learned about the "respectability" (once more!) of the owners of these firetraps, presumably the slum landlords will undergo a change of heart and make the necessary outlays for the minimum protection of life. Whoever asserts that such timid pressure, if indeed it can be called pressure at all, will alter the actions of the money-grubbers who own the ramshackle tenements, is either a fool or a demagogue. The only pressure that slum landlords can understand or will understand is pressure that threatens their gains culled at the expense of human misery. That pressure must come—and will only come—from the workers acting in a united mass through their organizations.

practical steps that the authorities are taking to solve the housing problem—erection of the Harlem Houses, the Williamsburg project, the Red Hook and Queens Bridge undertakings.

Government Program

As has been pointed out on other occasions, the entire low-cost housing program of the government—city, state, and federal—envisages the construction of some 250,000 to 300,000 dwellings by 1940 or 1941 for the entire country, whereas the immediate shortage of decent homes is conservatively estimated at the present time as five and a half million. In other words, all the grandiose and much-publicized efforts of the government may in several years time result in erecting four or five per cent of the homes desperately needed today. And it should be borne in mind that the need is not static, but is increasing every day.

It should also be borne in mind that in the majority of these so-called low-cost housing projects, the rent is so high that the present slum dwellers cannot possibly take up residence in them. The problem of the immediate demolition of firetrap tenements, which can be made possible only by the construction of many thousands of really low-rent housing projects, is a pressing one. No serious effort is being made to meet it.

The government, instead, is absorbed in the task of building a gigantic army and navy. President Roosevelt, in his recent budget speech to Congress, asked for \$2,000,000,000 for the armed forces of the country for the fiscal year 1939-1940. Two billions for the defense of Morgan, Rockefeller, DuPont et al investments abroad.

How about \$2,000,000,000 (at least!) in 1939-1940, Mr. President, for the defense of American lives in homes?

Tom Mooney Freed After Twenty-Two Year Battle

(Continued from page 1)
movement in this country to prevent the frame-up gang in California from hanging Mooney. So strong did the protest become that Governor Stephens of California found himself compelled, on Nov. 28, 1918, to commute Mooney's sentence to life imprisonment.

The tireless work of Mooney's friends, and defense committees that were formed throughout the country, continued to unearth new evidence and to reveal the whole sordid system by means of which Mooney had been convicted. Several witnesses against him subsequently recanted their false testimony, among them Frank C. Oxman and John MacDonald. A special investigation committee sent to California by President Wilson also disclosed that a frame-up had been perpetrated.

Years of Struggle

In spite of this, and in spite of the fact that 11 of the 12 living jurors, as well as the presiding judge, later called for Mooney's liberation, a succession of California governors refused to release the victim of class justice.

Finally, after years of agitation and repeated demonstrations of Mooney's innocence and the vicious frame-up which sent him to prison, and after years of sabotage and cynicism displayed by all the courts of the country before which the case was brought, including the United States Supreme Court, Mooney was par-

doned by Governor Olson. The long overdue gubernatorial action is only a confirmation of the contentions made by militant labor for 22 years that Mooney was the victim of capitalist justice, and a vindication of the fight made by the labor movement throughout the world.

Upon his release, Mooney declared that he intends to devote himself to restoring the unity of the American trade union movement, now divided between the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O.

Backed Olson

Although Mooney was imprisoned throughout the past 22 years, he remained in actuality the director of the campaign for his release conducted by the Defense Committee.

It is regarded as unfortunate, however, that while the campaign for Mooney was conducted for years on a militant working class basis, the famous class-war prisoner permitted himself, in the last elections, to urge workers to get behind the candidacy of the Democratic party nominee for Governor of California, Olson, which was the line taken by the Stalinists and other opponents of independent working class political action.

Meetings are being planned for Mooney in every important city and, judging from the enthusiastic parade which greeted him in San Francisco, workers will turn out in unprecedented numbers to welcome Mooney back to activity in labor's ranks.

Big Phila. Meeting Opens James Tour

PHILADELPHIA, Pa.—C. L. R. James opened up his cross country lecture tour before a large and appreciative audience in Philadelphia on Friday, Jan. 6. The noted Negro labor orator who spoke on the decline of the British empire showed an amazing grasp of all the factors involving the political and economic road of England's collapse.

"The name of England is being dragged through the mud in the colonies," James reported. Tracing historically the first cracks in the structure of one of the world's great imperial realms, he graphically exposed the meaning of Chamberlain's appeasement policy and the resultant pact of Munich. James completely captivated his audience with his graceful yet forceful platform style and his ability to clarify the issues on hand.

1600 WPA WOMEN FIRED ON COAST

Relief Union Plans to Fight New Firings

(Special to Socialist Appeal)
LOS ANGELES.—Some 1,600 women employed on the sewing projects were cut from W.P.A. rolls today and advised to seek work in private industry. Colonel Donald H. Connelly, Southern California W.P.A. administrator, in a statement to the local press declared that the original orders from Washington directed a cut of 2,600 persons but because of protests the cuts were restricted to the 1,600 women.

The first in the recent series of cuts was ordered the day after Thanksgiving when all class E, or disabled workers, were cut from the rolls. In the month of December the number employed was reduced by 6,000. At the end of November there were 53,000 employed by the W.P.A. in Southern California and to date the number has been reduced to 45,400.

Militants Fight Cuts

At the time of the discharges on Nov. 24, several experienced unemployed militants who received dismissals began to organize the unemployed and project workers in an effort to combat the cuts. They refused to seek assistance from the Workers Alliance. Their past membership in the W.A., according to their statement, convinced them that no real opposition to the W.P.A. cuts could be expected from this sterile organization controlled locally, lock, stock and barrel, by the Communist Party.

These militants, well known to the unemployed in Los Angeles, led by Mel Kitchen, one of the original members of the Workers Alliance in Los Angeles, set themselves the task of organizing the Relief Workers Protective Union, a name that is associated with one of the first and most effective unemployed organizations in So. Calif. Their first activity was the calling of a protest meeting which arranged a demonstration and a one day sit-down strike in the local offices of the W.P.A.

W.A. Opposition

The only activity of the W. A. in this period has been their efforts to prevent the organization of the R.W.P.U. At the first meeting called by the organizing committee for the R.W.P.U. the arriving workers witnessed the sight of frenzied members of the W.A. standing in front of the auditorium shouting to them to boycott the meeting and to attend the W. A. meeting called for the same night. By peculiar coincidence the W. A. has arranged meetings only when R.W.P.U. circulars appeared on the projects calling for a meeting, and each time the R.W.P.U. held a mass meeting the W. A. blossomed out with a meeting for the same evening.

The only militant action of the unemployed and project workers in Los Angeles in protest against the cuts has been undertaken by the young R.W.P.U. which promises to develop into a fighting union for the unemployed in Southern California.

Protest in St. Paul

ST. PAUL, Minn.—A resolution passed by the Warehouse Employees' Union of this city condemns in strong words the W.P.A. layoffs and the Roosevelt administration's war plans.

Declaring that it is the duty of all workers to assist the unemployed and to resist war, the union's resolution concludes with the demand that "all war appropriations be turned over to projects such as housing, which will be constructive rather than destructive."

UNION MEN DEFY MARTIAL LAW IN OKLA. OIL STRIKE

Tulsa Unions Are Roused by Call For Guard

(Special to Socialist Appeal)
TULSA, Oklahoma.—Organized labor throughout this area has thrown its entire weight behind the 2,000 oil workers on strike at the Mid-Continent plant here in an effort to keep the National Guard from breaking the walkout that began on Dec. 22.

Flagrant violation by the company of its agreement with Local 217, Oil Workers International Union, C.I.O., and its refusal to settle major grievances caused the strike.

Labor Backs Strikers

Realizing the grave danger of a defeat through the strike-breaking tactics of the National Guard which has declared martial law in that area, organized labor rallied quickly behind the strikers.

Merchants Aid Strike

The resentment against the National Guard is not confined to the strikers alone. Local merchants have given tons of food and kitchen equipment to the strikers in a fine demonstration of solidarity.

Union Lists 16 Grievances

The strikers are being paid \$10 a week in benefits by the International Union.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANTI-SEMITISM here and abroad and how to fight it, will be discussed by Felix Morrow, Sun, Jan. 15, at 8 P.M., at Grand Central Palace, 90 Clinton St. (above Delancey). Questions and discussion from floor. auspices, Lower East Side Branch, S.W.P., 163 Norfolk St., at Stanton.

CELEBRATE VICTORY Strike

Jamaica Unemployed Relief Workers League, Saturday, January 21st, Democratic Hall, 104-25 150th St., Jamaica, L.I. Band Entertainment Drinks

PHILADELPHIA

DWIGHT MACDONALD, editor of the Partisan Review, will speak for the Workers Educational Forum on "Refugees—1939's Problem." Time: 8:30, January 20th. Place: 277 South 11th Street.

AKRON

C. L. R. James will speak on the "Future For Racial Minorities." Friday evening, Jan. 20, at 8 p. m. at 399 1/2 S. Main St.

WANT ADS

GIRL WORKER—Student wants furnished room or studio. Rent within proletarian means. Within half-hour traveling distance of East 125th St. Answer: K. M., care of S. Stanley, 116 University Place, New York City.

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APPEAL ARMY

APPEAL ARMY BULLETIN NOW IN MAIL:

Bulletin No. 2 containing full and detailed information about the new Appeal, with plenty of suggestions for handling distribution, is now mailed out. We hope it will prove of value to lit-agents.

The most important thing is to get going on the new subscription drive that begins on February 1. Our slogan is: 1,000 new subscribers by April 1! Quotas will be published shortly as well as a list of prizes to be awarded to branches (not individuals this time) receiving and sending in the highest number of new subscriptions.

We reported last week on December being a record month for Appeal subscriptions. January, however, hasn't had such a good start although everything indicates a sharp pick-up for the next week. Here's the list for the past week:

Chicago	..... 7
Ohio	..... 6
New York City	..... 5
Massachusetts	..... 5
Missouri	..... 4
Minneapolis	..... 2
Rhode Island	..... 2
Philadelphia	..... 1
Washington, D. C.	..... 1
Connecticut	..... 1
California	..... 1
Foreign	..... 2
Total	..... 35

Karl Marx Shier of Chicago fame was quite successful at the Chicago local's New Year's Eve party. . . . He picked up half-a-dozen subs during the evening. . . . Only one bundle-order increase was recorded this week—that came from Sol Thomas of Philadelphia who now takes a total of 20 per week. . . .

REMINDERS:

(1) Send in your bundle-order increase for the 2-week Appeal.
(2) Have you gotten orders for the beautifully bound 1938 copy of the Appeal? Liberal commissions on 3 or more bound volumes sold!

Progressive Victimized By Painters Union In N.Y.

(Special to Socialist Appeal)
NEW YORK.—P. Chusid, a member of Local No. 442, chained himself to a post in the headquarters of District Council No. 9 of the Painters Union in New York last Saturday afternoon. To reporters and newspaper photographers who hastened to the scene, Chusid explained that his action was in protest against repeated discrimination against him by officials of the District Council in the handling out of work slips. He asserted that this discrimination was due to the fact that he disagreed with the Stalinist politics of the union leaders.

After several hectic hours in which big crowds gathered at the union headquarters, many to express their sympathy with the demonstrator, police were called to clear the hall and to saw off the chains.

Call Strong-Arm Men

The Stalinists, aghast at the spectacle for a while, nevertheless did not delay making a "reply" characteristic of their methods. As the workers filed out of union headquarters at the behest of the police, they were met by a squad of strong arm men from the Stalinist-controlled furriers union. The latter milled around, threatening various of the better known opposition militants. Several of the hooligans, whose names and dirty work are well-known throughout the market, concen-

lished route for over six months. We plan an extensive campaign in this direction in the very near future and I'm sure that if other locals try this type of circulation it will bring results." We agree heartily.

James V. Brown, lit-agent of Rochester, New York, has organized a mass-subscription plan under which every member of the Rochester branch will become a yearly subscriber and pay on the installment plan. We'd like to have other branches undertake such a scheme. Write The Manager for details.

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