

W. P. A. STRIKE BEGAN IN THE TWIN CITIES



In the Labor Unions

By B. J. WIDICK

AKRON, Ohio—The 55th annual convention of the Ohio Federation of Labor, just concluded, reflected the changing trends in the A.F.L. movement in this country.

Of major importance was the fact that the teamsters union assumed domination of the Ohio A.F.L. in Cleveland, Toledo, Cincinnati, Akron, Canton and Youngstown, the truck drivers union already had replaced the building trades unions as controlling factor in the central labor unions. This was extended to the Ohio Federation of Labor.

All this was shown definitely by the elections. The slate drawn up by the teamsters and backed by the meat-cutters and miscellaneous unions won without much effort.

Only by the grace of the teamsters were John E. Breidenbach, Dayton Republican labor boss, and Albert Dalton, Cleveland Republican "man within the labor movement" re-elected to the state executive board. Both were very unpopular, but their connections with the Governor Bricker Republican machine, the cause of their unpopularity, saved them. The teamsters felt they wanted an "inside" to the present state administration.

Green's Role

Resolutions demanding unity with the C.I.O. which went so far as to openly criticize the A.F.L. top leadership were introduced to the resolutions committee and backed by a large section of the delegates, including most of the teamsters.

Fearing that the convention would get out of line on this problem, Mike Lyden, president of the Ohio Federation of Labor, sent for William Green, A.F.L. president.

Green gave one of his typical demagogic speeches with emphasis on the "no compromise" attitude towards the C.I.O. And he brought along a renegade from the C.I.O., Homer Martin, to help him. Martin followed up Green's speech with a red-baiting talk in which, among other things, he washed a lot of dirty linen of the C.I.O.

Beal Case

Very seldom does an A.F.L. convention reject the unanimous recommendation of a key committee, such as the resolutions committee. A highlight of this convention was the reversal of the resolutions committee on the Fred Beal case.

After a brilliant short speech by Sam Pollock of Akron, state secretary-treasurer of the butchers union, the convention voted to demand freedom for Beal, although the resolutions committee was against it.

So effective was the talk of the Akron labor leader that a prominent member of the resolutions committee was overheard later congratulating Pollock on the victory.

Incidentally, Mike Lyden, the state president, tried to assist the resolutions committee by refusing to call the vote against the resolutions committee recommendation. This flagrant trick was quickly called to order by the delegates, and on a standing vote freedom for Beal was demanded.

It is necessary to add that a handful of Stalinist delegates voted against the Beal freedom resolution?

Workers' Control

The convention which passed a resolution which called for labor to prepare itself for control of all production. It was introduced by a Cleveland delegate who said he'd been thinking things over and felt that a real crisis was coming and labor would have to take power.

Thomas Donnelly, state federation secretary-treasurer, rushed to the microphone when he saw that no opposition was

Why and How It Started; What All Workers Can Learn From It

(Special to the Socialist Appeal) ST. PAUL—By Order of the National Administration:

Wages of building trades workers shall be cut 54 cents or more per hour!

Wages of common laborers shall be cut 9 cents an hour! Nearly a million workers shall be laid off W.P.A.!

This order was the opening attack on the W.P.A. workers. On July 5, hundreds of thousands of workers throughout the country found the new rules posted on their bulletin boards. They put down their tools and walked off on strike.

In the Twin Cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul, the strike began at the State Fair grounds, where the skilled mechanics refused to become scabs by working below their union scale. They understood that this order was an attempt to tear down the wage standards their unions had gained after half a century of struggle.

Other workers, not in the building trades, also had their scales cut. They gladly and enthusiastically joined their brothers, knowing that only by united action could they protect what little they had on the W.P.A. The Fair Grounds project was closed tight.

Cars of men cruised from job to job and were greeted with a welcome everywhere.

By evening most of the W.P.A. workers in the Twin Cities were out on strike.

Not until then did they discover that they were not alone. They learned that workers all over the country had done the same as they, and were striking a stunning blow in answer to the attack of the national administration.

STRIKE NOT PLANNED OR CALLED

The nationwide W.P.A. strike was not planned in advance, or called by any organization. It simply broke, like a thunderstorm, all over the country without any call.

What drove these men from their jobs, all at one time? Governor Stassen blames it on a "few leaders"; this is a lie because there weren't any leaders, the strike began with the action of the workers on the job alone. Only a vicious attack on their jobs and conditions, only a life and death question could have driven these hundreds of thousands of workers to quit work in an unled, spontaneous walkout.

WHY THE WORKERS WALKED OUT

The workers were driven off their jobs because of the vicious attack of the Roosevelt-Woodrum Starvation Law on their wages and conditions. The law lengthens hours and reduces the hourly rates for all workers, cutting the skilled union men most of all. The bill cuts down the money for W.P.A., and throws nearly a million men back to the breadlines. It also promises the W.P.A. workers in the North another big reduction in wages in September. For all workers with 18 months' experience it forces a lay-off of at least thirty days, and probably forever.

The Roosevelt-Woodrum Law is more than just a scheme to cut down and get rid of W.P.A. It is an opening attack on the labor movement as a whole. By cutting down wage scales on W.P.A. it paves the way for a wage-cutting drive in private industry. The A.F.L. Building Trades Council in New York City, which called its workers out on strike, saw this clearly when they pointed out that one of the most atrocious features of the bill lay in "tempting private industry to follow the example of the Works Progress Administration in preventing building trades workers from receiving a wage rate compar-

able with the American standard of living."

In other words, the law was aimed at all wage standards, not just at W.P.A.

How did the Twin City unions answer this threat to wages and conditions?

The union men on the job led the fight. It was the organized building trades men who started the walkout, in the Twin Cities and all over the country.

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STRIKE MOST EFFECTIVE IN MINNEAPOLIS

In Minneapolis the A.F.L. Building Trades Council not only supported the strike of its own members, but called for joint action with the unskilled workers. The Joint Action Committee constituted by unions and unemployed organizations took the lead and gave direction and support to the strike. Every project was closed tight. This power of the labor movement in cooperation with the unemployed was so great that the national administration had to sit up and take notice, and close the projects.

Because of this united power the W.P.A. strike was more effective in Minneapolis than in any other city in the country.

In St. Paul also the W.P.A. workers closed down the projects. They expected leadership from the trade union movement and asked for it. The building trades usually fear that the unemployed will take their jobs at less than union wages, and thus help drive down wage standards. In this case the unskilled workers wanted to help building trades mechanics protect their wage scales.

The St. Paul Building Trades Council endorsed the walkout of the union men and placed banners on W.P.A. projects. The Trades and Labor Assembly protested the wage cut, called it an assault on labor standards established over the past fifty years and called for restoration of the wage scale on W.P.A. The State Federation of Labor took a similar stand. But the leaders of the trade union movement in St. Paul did not organize cooperation with the unemployed to resist this assault on all workers. As a result, although the building trades men stayed out, more and more of the unskilled workers went back to the jobs.

STALINIST SABOTAGE IN DULUTH

In Duluth the only unemployed organization was the Workers Alliance which had complete control of the strike after it began spontaneously. The Alliance did not push the fight or try to work with the trade union movement. It used the strike only for praising Roosevelt and passing Roosevelt-third-term resolutions. The building trades mechanics are still off the jobs, but the unskilled workers, having no militant leadership, soon called their strike off.

In the early days of the strike the national leaders of organized labor went along with the wishes of the workers. William Green of the A.F.L. said he would support the move to prevent lowering of wages. John L. Lewis of the C.I.O. expressed his support of the walkout. These statements, in turn, gave new drive and courage to the fighters on the picket line for a time. But the leaders did not show the way for organized action. They were not ready for a determined fight. They had too many ties with the politicians of the national administration.

The same politicians are the ones responsible for the Roosevelt-Woodrum law.

WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS LAW?

Woodrum was the chairman of the sub-committee in charge of this legislation. He was the official spokesman of Roosevelt's New Deal organization in Congress.

Roosevelt himself on April 27 publicly proposed the cut in the W.P.A. appropriation that throws a million men out of work.

Colonel F. C. Harrington, recently appointed administrator by Roosevelt, was the man who proposed the wage-cutting provision requiring 130 hours of work per month.

vote and quick action.

Roosevelt was behind this bill from the very beginning. He remained silent when the strike broke. He was smoked out when the workers put on the pressure and he definitely lined up against labor, first by supporting Murphy and Harrington in their efforts to break the strike, then by stating that he was in favor of abolishing the prevailing wage rule, and finally by lashing out openly against the strike in his now-famous strikebreaking speech. "You cannot strike against the government."

As the Minnesota Union Advocate, the newspaper of the St. Paul A.F.L. unions, said on July 13, 1939: "Now Labor knows it has suffered another political doublecross; that the President is definitely aligned against Labor; that it was his wish and his will that prompted Congress to completely reverse the administration's Labor policy—and that from now on Labor can look for few crumbs under the table of the New Deal."

"He (Roosevelt), undoubtedly feels that Labor is sewed in a political sack and safely in cold storage for 1940. Now he must make overtures to those who exploit Labor—and the 'security wage' is the bait that will best serve his purpose."

Exactly. The bosses of American industry, and Roosevelt and the rest of the New Deal boss politicians, believe that they have nothing to fear from the workers. Their organizations and leaders have been sewed up in old party politics, so if the workers want to protest against the New Deal they have no way of doing it. They can only vote for the Republicans, who are just as hostile to Labor as the Democrats.

They had no Labor Party to vote for.

In Minnesota the Republican Stassen machine is attacking labor with every weapon in its power. Governor Stassen has viciously denounced the Minneapolis labor movement and is acting as Attorney General Murphy's stool pigeon. He invited labor leaders to his office, supposedly to discuss settlement of the strike, and then turned over his notes of these discussions to the G-Men to be brought into the Grand Jury! He is calling for the framing of the militant leaders of Minneapolis labor. The Republican Mayors, Fallon and Leach, fought the strike, threatened to withhold relief, and used the police to slug, shoot and kill strikers.

The Workers Alliance, led by the Communist Party New Dealers, did not want to embarrass the New Deal. They poured cold water on the strike and broke it where they could, as in Duluth. Lasser, the head of the Alliance, came to Minneapolis, the center of action, and publicly announced that the strike should be called off. This was done deliberately to throw confusion into the ranks of the workers. The Alliance tried to make the strike a demonstration for labor's enemy, the New Deal. It tried to pass third term resolutions at strike meetings and the very time when Roosevelt was publicly denouncing the strike. By doing this they were actually breaking the strike.

The strike has shown that the American workers were willing and anxious to fight against this attack; but because they did not have organization and leadership throughout the country they could not keep up the fight. Had the trade union movement throughout the country been prepared, as it was in Minneapolis, the strike could have been won. As it was, Minneapolis was isolated and had to call off its strike of unskilled workers. The organized building trades men are still refusing to work at less than the union scale.

The Minneapolis labor movement was able to force the governmental officials into negotiations, and won the concession that workers fired under the 5-day rule be given preference in re-hiring.

The attack of the New Deal is just beginning. Big business and its government are making a drive against all organized labor. Labor must prepare itself for the fight; it must strengthen its unions and build its own political party; it must stop trusting its enemies. Only the independent power of the workers can carry on labor's battle.

The Appeal In Action



An Appeal Salesman in the midst of the W.P.A. demonstration at Akron.

BUILDING SLUMP MINNEAPOLIS CHARGED TO BIG BANKERS DRIVERS WIN WAGE DISPUTE

(Continued from Page 1)

that the building workers accept lower wages and a speed-up; "a greater annual income, based on having more work to do during the year, without need to stretch the hours of work and the rate of pay on each particular job," were Arnold's words.

Dr. Kreps, of the Temporary National Economic Committee's consulting staff, laid down the proposition that the monthly carrying charge is the really important item, in testimony subsequent to that of Arnold.

He was followed by Robert Davison, the Pierce Foundation director of housing research, who estimated that a 20 percent cut in material costs would knock off 9.33 percent off monthly fixed charges, and 20 percent off interest and amortization costs would cut monthly fixed charges by 16.69 percent—but that a like cut in labor costs would subtract only 4.67 percent!

Arnold Covers up Banks

In other words, as between equal cuts in labor costs and other costs, a cut in financing costs would have four times as much effect, and a cut in materials would have more than twice the effect. The testimony did not touch on the equally important effect to be derived from cutting the artificially-high cost of building sites.

Precisely these major factors were left out by Arnold, who stated that "credit facilities" and "land values" are "not within the scope of this report."

In plain English: the banks, which control credit facilities, the construction companies (through interlocking directorates) and the building sites (through mortgages) — control every major factor which paralyzes the industry—and are absolved by Arnold, who centers his fire on union wages.

What has happened is that the wage-cutting drive against the building trades unions previously launched by the banks, has now been taken up by the Roosevelt government.

Allentown Workers Fight Layoff

(Continued from Page 1)

In a ringing speech Heckman appealed to the workers assembled to join with him in building the Unemployed and Project Workers Union to ward off the starvation and misery which the so-called New Deal is "planning" for the workers with its recent action of relief and W.P.A.

Scores of workers signed application cards right then and there. Discussions continued far into the night, long after the meeting had been adjourned.

APPEAL QUOTAS SET FOR CAMPAIGN

The War Referendum Campaign of the Socialist Workers Party is now under way.

Included in this campaign is the aim of raising the Appeal circulation by 1,000 per issue—400 new subscriptions and 600 increase in bundle order circulation.

Both these quotas are modest indeed and have been carefully assigned and divided up among the various branches of the country.

We recommend the appointment of special Appeal quota committees which will have charge of getting these new subscriptions.

All comrades must actively participate in this work. It can only be accomplished by visiting friends, ex-subscribers etc. for the purpose of getting subscriptions. Bundle orders can only be sold by selling more papers. If you sell in the streets only once each week now you must sell twice each week.

THE BRANCHES AT WORK

"The Appeal has improved tremendously. The W. P. A. issues were crackerjacks!" Karl Shier, Chicago summer literature agent.

"The distribution at the

waterfront is going on regularly. We catch the longshoremen twice a week when they go down to the dispatchers at 6:30 in the morning. Since dozens of them pile into busses to travel a half hour to work we figure they have time to read and talk about the paper. This week I intend to take down the anti-Coughlin pamphlet the day after I peddle the papers." El Booth, San Francisco Appeal agent.

Here's a list of new subs obtained during the past week. A good beginning in getting under way for our goal of 400 new readers by September 15.

NEW YORK CITY	14
Minneapolis	8
Chicago	7
California	4
Foreign	3
Detroit	2
Montana	2
Nevada	1
Wyoming	1
Ohio	1
Tennessee	1
Connecticut	1
Newark	1
Total	46

Cleveland has doubled its old bundle order and now takes 100 copies of each issue of the Appeal.

'Labor Government Needed' W.P.A. Pickets Tell Reporter

By NEIL WHITE

On the picket line, North Beach Airport—"The bricklayers union won't work for nobody under the prevailing wage, not even the U. S. Government", replied Harry Miller, who is a member of Bricklayers Union, Local 41, and who lives at 3255 Steilway St., Astoria, in response to this reporter's question as to what he thought about the "you can't strike against the government" edict of President Roosevelt.

"It's not so much W.P.A.," he continued, "we're striking to keep prevailing wages up all over. We're afraid of trouble with the private bosses if we lose this strike. The boss in private industry will cut wages if the W.P.A. does."

For Labor Government

"What do you think of the idea of a labor government," this reporter asked, "seeing that Hoover gave the workers neither jobs nor relief and the little Roosevelt gave he's taking away?"

"Well I don't know", Miller answered, "this whole thing came as a surprise to me. The government was pretty good up to now, but if this government is lined up against the unions—you can quote me in favor of a labor government."

"I agree with him", chimed in J. W. Bailey, 229 Webster Ave., Brooklyn, who is also a member of Local 41.

"Men in congress who are supposed to represent us have just touch with us. Men who have never been hungry have no sympathy with those who have. The representatives in congress forget who put them there. In a choice between Cap-

ital and Labor, they always choose Capital. I agree with Miller, union workers would be better off with their own party."

"Any man who considers himself a mechanic will not work for seventy-one cents an hour", said Charles Ferrari, A.F.L. mechanic, in response to my question as to what he thought about the strike.

"How much were you making before the strike?"

"Two dollars an hour", he replied.

"Do you think that Roosevelt is justified when he says that you can't strike against the government?"

"No, I don't think he's justified", Ferrari replied.

By this time some fifteen pickets had gathered around this writer.

They're Getting Wise

One of them, who gave his name as Victor Sedacca, popped up, "I still don't think it's Roosevelt's fault", he said, "Roosevelt is trying his hardest, I still think he's all right."

"Listen to him", said Miller, "Roosevelt signed the bill; Roosevelt agrees with the cut—two and two are four—but he says it's five!"

"Yes, he signed the bill", said one worker.

"You can't trust Roosevelt anymore", said another.

"Roosevelt will never get the bricklayers' vote again", said Miller, "you have to choose a labor candidate; that's all that's left to us."

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