

ACCION

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Publicity Committee.

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"MOVING AHEAD"

We have come a long way since 1903. It can even be said that we have come a long way since 1946. Lookers-on after hearing this statement may ask this question: "Why and how have you come a long way?" We can answer this by simply saying: "Through the course of civilization." But does that adequately answer the question? Of course not. The true answer to that is more complex and only by careful and detailed explanations can we successfully answer it. Let us then state our answer in cold facts so that the outsider may understand very clearly.

Back in 1903 the first set of contract-workers were brought to the Isthmus of Panama to work on the Isthmian Canal Commissions Project that is on the building of the present Panama Canal, one of the seven wonders of the world. These men were brought here packed together on shipboard like cattle and dumped into the malaria and yellow fever infested swamps and jungle. They were paid but a small pittance per month, and were crammed in camps fit for pigs. Later when many married, they found one and two room apartments in some dilapidated house with no running water, electricity, or sanitary fixtures.

Life for them was a twenty-four hour battle, a battle against heat, rain mosquitoes and a cursing, kicking white boss. After long hours on the job the fight continued against cheap and poorly cooked foods, dysentery, malaria, yellow fever, and all the misery that poverty can bring. This sort of life kept up with apparently no change until 1914 when colored townsites were finally constructed by the Canal Government, which contributed to better sanitary conditions.

The completion of the Canal in 1914 found large portions of these laborers broken men—broken in body and spirit. The Canal authorities then commenced a survey of the colored employees and repatriated most of these disabled employees to their native homes with hardly any compensation for their broken bodies and shattered nerves. In spite of all these tribulations these laborers continued to work and suffer with the hope that one day the Canal Government would have compassion on them and elevate their meager standard of living. This hope which kindled the fire of loyalty and good service for more than 15 years with the I.C.C. was finally blown away by the winds of false promises and "Glass Castles" of the A. F. of L. In 1919 the A. F. of L. Highwaymen organized the anxious, destitute workers, who willingly and quickly paid their dues believing that here at last was their salvation, their liberation from the clutches of the heartless employers. Soon they were to be disillusioned. After a few months \$80,000.00 was collected and these A.F. of L. representatives sent the colored workers on strike and calmly caught the first boat back to the States, unmolested by the Federal Government, with \$80,000.00 bulging from their pockets.

The strike, as can be imagined brought no gains, neither material nor moral. Some workers resumed their positions and life went back to normal. Then came the birth of the Panama Canal West Indian Silver Employees Association in 1920. This organization, with all its limitations fought for the improvement of the laboring class. It was responsible for many gains, and at least it gave the West Indian workers a shoulder to lean on. However this was not the solution to the laborer's problems.

In struggle after struggle the living and working conditions on the Canal Zone remained the same until during World War II, when the U. S. Government introduced such improvements as wage adjustments, rest leave.

In May, 1946 the Canal Zone Workers Union came on the scene. This union was welcomed by all with open arms and its crowning achievement was the signing of a CIO Charter, in June the same year.

The advent of Local 7173, United Public Workers of America, CIO has been the historical turning point of the laboring class of the worker on the Canal Zone. It has been their mightiest step forward. Never before has the common worker been able to defend himself without fear of losing his job, never before was his cause placed before the Congress of the U.S., never before was his representative able to bargain, with the authorities of the Canal Zone. The gains of the union are piling up. It has been successful in the establishment of a grievance procedure, improved rest leave, approximately \$3,500,000.00 salary increases, and many other gains. These gains are not all which will be won by Local 713. This is only the beginning, but can this union continue to fight and succeed without the concerted backing of the working class? No! Local 713 needs a 100% support, only with this can this union triumph.

We have not forgotten our past, a past filled with suffering, discrimination and oppression. It is because of this we do not want to go back to the "Construction Days," its because of this Local 713 was organized, it's because of this that all the "Red Baiting" against our union falls off like water on a duck's back.

We cannot, we must not allow anyone to destroy our union. It is our last and only instrument by which we are to rise out of this sea of Jim Crowism. In the not too distant future, the laboring class on the Canal Zone will lift its head high in the knowledge that it is free and equal.



ENEMIES EVERYWHERE

NOW WE ARE NOW WE AREN'T

In a prepared statement submitted to the Local 713 Executive Board and then released to the press, Nathan Reid, former editor of Accion said: "The charges that the United Public Workers of America is a Communist-Controlled organization that were once spoken as a whisper, are now being shouted from the housetops. We know that there is a spirit abroad in the land today which whispers "Communist" or "Communitic" every time a new and potent personality or force makes itself felt..."

"We should demand, in deference to our peculiar situation, that only individuals who are free from the Communist taint be sent down here to help us, and begin to look ahead to the day when circumstances may compel us to stand on our own or seek help elsewhere."

Compare this with Reid's statement in the last issue of ACCION: "Local 713, UPW-CIO, for whom we proudly speak, having no ideological racketeers either among its leadership or within its rank and file and daring even the celebrated Mr. Thomas to read communism into its equitable and legitimate demands, frankly welcomes him."

"If the Honorable Gentlemen is here to really indulge in his favorite pastime (hunting Russian bears) his disappointment will be keen. The genuine specie is unknown in these parts."

What happened during the past month to change your mind, Mr. Reid?



FIRST MONTH

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liams; Paraiso—J. B. Martinez, A. Johnson, and D. Maynard; Red Tank—F. Yard and A. Alexis. There were many other stewards with excellent records but there is not space to give recognition to all of them.

President Ampudia reminded the stewards and officials that February was only the first month of the drive, "There is still March and April," he stated, "and we must strive to make these months equally successful."

"Let us all make sure", he stated, "that our victory dance to be given at the end of the organizing drive in honor of the winning chapter will be something of which we will all be truly proud."

Reclassification

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"It is evident that the reclassification was not intended to take care of a wage increase to offset the rise in the cost of living on the Canal Zone. This problem requires the immediate attention of the authorities and should be and can be resolved by the granting of an across-the-board raise for all workers.

"The Union has received complaints from many individuals and groups of employees who feel that they have not been properly classified. We want to assure these and others that all these complaints will be given full consideration and properly processed to determine whether there were any errors on the part of the authorities. The Union is awaiting the job descriptions now in preparation at Balboa Heights in order to systematically determine any such errors."

Organize your Neighbor

ABOUT FACE!

The following statement by George Westerman in his column "The Passing Review" appeared in the Panama Tribune on February 22, 1948:

"Now in the face of the Red hysteria that is sweeping the United States and the Government's action to rid organized movements of the incubus of communistic influences, or prevent further infiltration, of Communism among unsuspecting union workers in all government agencies, the silver employees on the Canal Zone find themselves called upon to make a bold, yet painful decision. It is broadly suggested to them that they disassociate themselves from the leadership of UPWA."

Compare this with the statement made by Westerman to New York papers in June of 1947 (refer "The Nation", June 23, 1947.)

The charge of communism hurled against Local 713, UPW-CIO in the Canal Zone is the machinery of the reactionary forces to crush a liberal force.

"There is nothing which indicates communism, and if this charge is permitted to grow it will mean the end of a free enterprise system. Improved working conditions, better living facilities advanced educational opportunities and greater future security form the basis of demands being made by the Panama Canal "silver" employees through their affiliation with the CIO."

Why all the twisting and turning Mr. Westerman?

EVERY DELEGATE
IS EXPECTED
TO DO HIS DUTY