

BRODSKY (Cont. from Page 1)

Chapter held its regular chapter meeting. Angry speeches were made by the officers and rank and file members denouncing this new attack against their union and the membership unanimously passed a resolution of protest. Cristobal's prompt and decisive action served as a rallying cry for the entire union.

On Sunday, March 13th, the Local Executive Board held a special meeting. Here, the leaders of the union planned Local 713's participation in the campaign which broke with fury during the following week. The Executive adopted a statement of policy condemning the expulsion of the Regional Director and called upon the entire union membership to fight this attack against their union.

Petition campaign launched

At this meeting the Executive Board decided to circulate a petition among union members calling upon Presidente Domingo Diaz of the Republic of Panama to revoke the expulsion order against Brodsky.

While the petitions were being circulated hundreds of UPW members and Panamanian citizens exercised their constitutional rights and dispatched telegram to President Diaz urging him to correct the Foreign Minister's action.

Officials attempt crack-down

On Tuesday plans were announced to hold a monster demonstration and parade of protest starting from De Lesseps Park and proceeding to the President's Palace. It was then that the crack-down came.

On Tuesday, the Foreign Minister issued a statement that he would summarily deport any alien who was caught soliciting signatures, on the petition. The statement of the Foreign Minister was blown up and distorted by the press so as to make it appear that the Foreign Minister was threatening to deport anyone signing the petition. Immediately afterward, Deputy Jorge Illueca declared publicly that the right of protest, public opinion, and petition belonged to all residents of the Republic whether citizens or not under the Constitution and quoted sections of the Constitution of the Republic to clarify the rights of the people.

Although the press reported that hundreds of persons asked that their names be removed from the petition as a result of the intimidation, the fact was that only 12 persons came into the union office to scratch out their names. The overwhelming portion of the Union membership stood firm in the face of this threat. They refused to be intimidated.

On the following day came the next blow. The press wildly headlined a release from the Administration which stated that employees who were guilty of disorderly conduct during the demonstration would be summarily discharged. Again the statement was distorted and some newspaper accounts went so far as to state that any employees who participated at all in the demonstration would be discharged from the Panama Canal or Panama Railroad. The gleeful press had a hey-day in exaggerating and distorting the news and happily predicted that the demonstration would be



This photograph, taken during the demonstration, shows one of the detachments of police near De Lesseps Park.

quashed.

The circular of the Administration was mimeographed and distributed to all departments with unprecedented haste. Copies were distributed to the employees in some areas personally, in others they were plastered all over bulletin boards and, as if to make sure, some supervisors held emergency meetings with their employees informing them of the statement. Cocoli Dispensary, which has three employees received 32 copies of the circular.

In Army areas many employees were told by their supervisors that any participation at all in the mass meeting would mean immediate discharge, although they were careful not to display any written statements to this effect.

As Thursday rolled around the air was charged with an electric intensity. Everyone wondered if, in the face of all the intimidation, the employees would have shown their faces at the demonstration.

Display of Armed Might

Then early Thursday afternoon, as if in preparation of the final threat, the military and police forces started assembling in the Canal Zone and in Panama. Military police were stationed at intervals all along Fourth of July Avenue. Canal Zone policemen were out in unusual force. It appeared that the whole Atlantic side force had been called over. Patrol cars buzzed up and down Fourth of July Avenue in seemingly angry anticipation.

Meanwhile formidable looking armored cars were located in Ancon and a number of ambulances were stationed nearby. In front of Hotel Tivoli was a fire truck with hoses trained on the Canal Zone border. Plain clothesmen seemed to be at every strategic vantage point.

In Panama the armed display was an awesome sight. Along De Lesseps Park were sixty mounted policemen and at least double that number on foot. They were in full battle dress with sparkling helmets and knapsacks. A number of them clutched riot guns and tear gas rifles. Across the street stood dozens of armed Panamanian police poised by their waiting motorcycles.

To observers it appeared that the combined military might of the Canal Zone and the Republic was being massed to repel some foreign invader.

De Lesseps Park Filled

Nevertheless, in the face of this terrifying armed display, a crowd began collecting in the Park. By four o'clock it had grown to large proportions. A

number of those who had waited on the sidelines gathered courage from the bold group that had assembled and began stepping out in front of the drawn sabers and the muzzles of the rifles. By five o'clock hundreds and hundreds of people had gathered in the park.

One union member remarked as he looked around at the armed might on foot and on horse back. "My God, if Local 713 can cause all this, I sure didn't realize our strength!"

Sabotage in Colon

Meanwhile, in Colon UPW members and their friends were scurrying around for transportation to Panama. For 24 hours union officials had been attempting to obtain a special train to carry members to the demonstration. Finally, on Thursday morning at 10 o'clock the word came. It was no. Then they started to look for busses.

Wherever they went they found that some official had been there first and had warned against using busses to carry people to Panama. Despite this however, near-heroic efforts of union officials were able to obtain 18 large busses to carry the members across.

The busses started rolling to Panama at 4:30. At Sabanitas the busses were stopped by police who demanded to see their permits. After the leader showed the permits, the police said that they were not signed properly and ordered the busses to return until they could present properly signed permits. The busses returned to Colon, the officials were looked up and the permits were signed once again.

As they stopped at Sabanitas again, this time the police asked the bus drivers to show their flashlights. When some were unable to do so they were forced to return to Colon. After flashlights were picked up, they were stopped again at Sabanitas.

This time the divers were asked for spare tires and all sorts of technical and unheard of regulations were pressed upon the vehicles. Then the riders were systematically searched for weapons and everyone had to produce their cedula. The names of the riders were taken down in a menacing manner.

Even after all the technicalities and regulations were complied with, only two busses were allowed to proceed. All the others were forced to return to Colon with their occupants. Thus, all except a few from the hardy band of 500 union members were forced to

sit it out in Colon while their brothers and sisters protested in Panama.

Thronged Park

By 6 o'clock in De Lesseps Park and nearby, a tremendous throng of over 4,000 people had collected. The area in front of the Toldo structure was filled to capacity and the crowd had spilled over to the adjacent streets and sidewalks. The traffic island in Central Avenue was even covered.

Here again the newspaper gave misleading reports. Some of them conveniently left off a zero as they stated that only 500 people were present. Another paper pointed out that there were over a thousand. They couldn't even agree among themselves. Anyone who was present in De Lesseps Park that Thursday afternoon knows fully well that there were over 4,000 union members and Panamanians in and around the area. There were union members present from Cristobal, Gatun, Gamboa, Paraiso, Red Tank, and Balboa. Every community was represented.

Despite all the threats, intimidations, the faint-hearted who spread their confusion, sabotage of Colon bus transportation, and the display of armed might, union members came out in thousands to voice their protest and to stand by their union. It was an inspiring sight as the young and old, men and women stood side by side and shouted Viva! in answer to the speakers who voiced their feelings in Viva Brodsky! Viva Local 713! Viva La Democracia! Viva los Obreros de la Zona!

There was not a single union member who left De Lesseps Park that night without a feeling of pride that he had braved the utmost in opposition to exercise his constitutional rights and to demonstrate to the world his support to Max Brodsky and to his union.

As Brother Brodsky left Albrook Field early Saturday morning he stated, "The last word has not yet been spoken nor has the last blow been struck!" And the following morning, the people read in the papers that a formal protest had already been filed with the United Nations against Brodsky's expulsion. It seemed that this action would reverberate for weeks to come. It had been taken out of Panama and the Canal Zone and into the eyes of the world.

All Paid Up . . .

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ment fee. In the case of new members, they will not become eligible until three months following the payment of their first months' dues.

The next issue of Accion will carry more information of the Death Benefit Fund and will carry the full text of the regulations.

Union Wins . . .

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ed employee effective January 1, 1947, at \$213.96 per year and from April 1, 1948 at the rate of \$267.48 per year. Deducted from the total amount due him will be \$92.56 as a service credit deposit.

Brother Moody upon the receipt of his annuity expressed his heartfelt appreciation to Organizer Garcia and Local 713, for the assistance given him in securing a pension in his old age.

Section Head . . . (Continued from page 1)

an entrance grade or training position yet commissary employees are found with as much as three and four years experience still in grade one.

A Sales Clerk's job can hardly be called an unskilled position. She or he is responsible for selling, assisting in inventory, preparation of reports, and efficient arrangement and display of merchandise.

Finally it was pointed out that both Section Heads and Sales Clerk's are responsible for stock shortage. An employee who has worked for many years in a commissary and given faithful service may be summarily disciplined, ranging from transfer and demotion to discharge, because the inventory is short.

The Union pointed out that sometimes these shortages occur as a result of thefts, shoplifting, clerical errors, etc., which are not under the control of the employees, yet they are disciplined for them. Not only does this subject them to a grave responsibility, but it puts them under great emotional strain and pressure as inventory time rolls around each month.

In some cases, employees with perfect work records and years of service have been suddenly fired because of an unfavorable inventory check. This wasn't all however. They also received the kind of clearance which made it very difficult or impossible for them to find employment again on the Canal Zone.

If the Commissary Division was going to place such responsibility on the employee, the Union pointed out, then the employees are not being properly paid and their pay rates should be substantially increased.

Union Appeal Spares Canal Seamen Midnight Walk

When the 10 P.M. train was cut out on February 21st, it looked like many Canal Seamen would have a long trek home at night from the Diablo crossing.

The elimination of the 10 o'clock passenger train meant that the Canal Seamen returning from the Atlantic side would travel back on the 11:30 P. M. freight in special coach hitched on the train.

This train however went no farther than the Diablo yard, and when the eighty or so seamen jumped off at 1:30 in the morning there was no bus to take them to their homes in Panama or La Boca.

A delegation from the Marine Division, consisting of Herbert McKenzie, Oswald Hogan and Herman Moore, Organizer, talked the matter over with Captain Hutchinson, Balboa Port Captain and requested that some kind of transportation be furnished the Canal Seamen to avoid the long walk home.

Within a few days time, the Seamen returning on the train early in morning found three or four trucks waiting to spare them the exhausting walk home.

Chalk up another grievance settlement to prompt Union action and exemplary cooperation by the Marine Division.