

REPORT TO LABOR BODY SHOWS UNION RECORD OF GALLUP DEFENDANTS

Fontecchio's Tale That Convicted Miners Were Not Members of U.M.W.A. Blasted by Account of Long Leadership of Workers

By Cyril Briggs

In railroading three Gallup miners to prison terms of 45 to 60 years each, the Gallup American Coal Company used one of the most familiar tactics of the bosses when they set out to get rid of militant workers, whose activities in behalf of the working class threaten their profits. That tactic is to attempt to isolate their intended victims from the labor movement and the masses of workers.

In the application of this tactic, it is clearly necessary to have the cooperation of a certain well-known type of "labor leader." Tom Mooney, serving a life sentence in California on perjured testimony, unmasked many gentlemen of this type in his pamphlet, "Tom Mooney Betrayed by Labor Leaders."

Officials Who Help Bosses

This cooperation was not lacking in the Gallup case. It was furnished by Nicholas Fontecchio, International representative of the United Mine Workers of America. The method in this case consisted of a blanket denial by Mr. Fontecchio that the three convicted miners, and seven other framed with them on the same charge, were, or ever had been, members of the U.M.W.A. This damnable lie had as its aim the fulfillment of the coal bosses' wishes to isolate the defendants and deprive them of the support of the organized labor movement. It was followed by a threat by Mr. Fontecchio to revoke the charters of those U.M.W.A. locals in his district that voted financial and moral support for the defendants.

What consideration Mr. Fontecchio received from the coal barons for this monstrous betrayal of ten miners, threatened with death sentences in a murder frame-up in connection with the killing on April 4, 1935, of Sheriff Carmichael by his own deputies, is naturally not known. Nor is it essential for the record. It is sufficient to remember, in connection with Mr. Fontecchio's services to the Gallup Coal Company, the case (among others) of Frank Farrington, former district president of the Illinois District of the U.M.W.A., who piled up quite a comfortable fortune indeed through his betrayals of the struggles of the miners.

Central Body Investigates

Something of these matters must have been in the minds of the delegates of the Central Trades and Labor Assembly when they voted to investigate controversial questions dealing with the membership of the Gallup defendants in the United Mine Workers of America; despite Mr. Fontecchio's assertions that they were never affiliated with the U.M.W.A.

A review of the trade union activities of the defendants in the National Miners Union, and subsequently in the U.M.W.A., following the consolidation of the two unions, is now in the hands of Ray Lowderback, secretary of the Central Trades and Labor Assembly of Denver, and appointed by that body as

a committee of one to investigate the matter.

The review, prepared by Jeff Goodman, secretary of the Regional Gallup Defense Committee in Denver, and Frank Spector, a representative of the National Gallup Defense Committee, completely refutes the lies of Mr. Fontecchio, stalwart aid to the Gallup American Coal Company. The review marshals the facts known to many New Mexico trade unionists on the trade union activities of the defendants, and their fight for the unification of the forces of the miners through the merging of the National Miners Union and the United Mine Workers of America.

Juan Ochoa, Manuel Avitia and Leandro Velarde, the three convicted miners, were together with their co-defendants, leaders of the Gallup miners, whom they inspired in their decision to join the U. M. W. A. in a body, and thus unify all the miners' forces.

Led 1933 Strike

The defendants were leaders of the 1933 strike of Gallup coal miners. Their subsequent framing was an act of revenge by the coal bosses for their militant leadership in that strike. The Gallup miners had previously voted 451 to 27 to join the N. M. U., after hearing addresses by representatives of the two unions. The strike was conducted by the N. M. U. Some time after the strike the men approved the decision of the N. M. U. to fuse with the U. M. W. A.

The document presented to the representative of the Central Trades and Labor Assembly of Denver, relates the part played by the defendants in the negotiations leading up to the final decisions:

Union Report of Merger

"Leading up to final unity, there took place a number of meetings in the coal camps. Mr. Nicholas Fontecchio, the U. M. W. A.'s International Representative, was present at these meetings. In attendance also was the negotiating committee appointed by the N. M. U. sub-district board, and containing Juan Ochoa, who acted as Mr. Fontecchio's official interpreter, Joe Bartol, one of the ten framed men and president of the Southwestern local, Frank Williams, N. M. U. sub-district board official [deported shortly after April 4—the day of the 'riot'—to England because of his union activities]; George Barrola, secretary at the time of the Allison local, and Jesus Golinda, a Mexican miner also deported after April 4. . . .

"With the exception of the Southwestern local, all locals met prior to April 4. All U. M. W. A. material—membership cards, Constitution and By-laws, etc.—were supplied to the members at these meetings. Local officers were elected and U. M. W. A. charters were received by them. The Southwestern local was prevented from holding its regular meeting on the night of April 4 because of the 'riot' during the day. At its prior meeting, the local voted unanimously to retain its old officers. Mr. Fontecchio agreed with this decision and caused all the union material for the membership to be turned over to Joe Bartol, president. This local at the same meeting also voted unanimously to request a new charter, in place of the one issued by the U. M. W. A. on Jan. 11, 1934, at the time of a strike in the Southwestern mine to two shady individuals who never worked in mines and whom the Southwestern mine owners instigated to use the U. M. W. A. charter to break the strike. However, pending the settlement of this question, the old charter was transferred to Joe Bartol. In the meantime, all the material kept by Joe Bartol pending the April 4 meeting was confiscated by the police in the raid upon his home, during the 'round-up' of the miners that followed the events of April 4."

Reject Fontecchio's "Reasons"

This is the "basis"—prevention by the police of the holding of the meeting of the Southwestern Local for distribution to the members of their U. M. W. A. membership cards—for Fontecchio's denial that the defendants are members of the U. M. W. A. This, and the fact that some of the defendants were unemployed as a result of the blacklist, and the rules of the U. M. W. A. barring unemployed miners from joining the union.

But are these "reasons" acceptable to any honest worker? The answer is given in the wide support by organized labor to the Gallup Defense. "Fortunately for union labor," the authors of the document handed to Mr. Lowderback correctly state, "the Fontecchio type of leaders are becoming scarce under the growing will of organized labor to fight against the present employers' offensive against its standard of living. Thousands of trade unionists from all over the country joined by thousands of friends of labor have come forward in the fight against the Gallup frame-up. To them it is also a fight against the pernicious reactionary forces who are trying to establish in our country a bloody fascist rule."

That fight must go on until the three convicted defendants are freed, the charges against two others thrown out, and the back of the bloody coal bosses' terror in Gallup is broken.

Pocketbook Union Settles Jersey Firm

The Classy Leather Goods Company of Middletown, N. J., one of the most important out-of-town companies in the industry, has signed an agreement with the International Pocketbook Workers' Union, A. F. of L., it was learned yesterday at offices of the union, 53 West Twenty-First Street, New York City.

Owners of the company, employing more than 200 workers, formerly held an agreement with the union, but refused to sign one last year, union leaders said. Due to weakness of the union last year nothing could be done to force the company to come to terms. This year the company found it "desirable" to come to a peaceful understanding and signed an agreement. Sam Reinlieb, out-of-town organizer for the union, has conducted a campaign of organization among the workers in the plant and brought about the settlement.

Union leaders also reported that the organization succeeded recently in setting up a local in Montreal, Canada, through the efforts of Sam Laderman, manager of the union's Chicago local and general organizer for the Middle West. Fifty workers joined the organization upon the formation of the local. There are approximately 500 pocketbook makers in the city of Montreal.

Progress in organization work was reported by the union in numerous cities throughout the country. Local and general organizers, it was stated, were engaged in a unionization drive in Philadelphia, Allentown, Easton, Bethlehem and Scranton in the State of Pennsylvania, numerous cities in the State of New Jersey, South Norwalk and Bridgeport, Conn., and various towns in Massachusetts, the Middle West and Toronto, Canada.

Final preparations have been made by the union for the general membership meeting Monday night in the Stuyvesant High School, Fifth Street at First Avenue, where second nominations for officers will be made and one member to the Election and Objection Committee elected. A ruling will also be made as to who may participate in the forthcoming elections in the union and who will have the right to run for offices in the administration.