

"Wasteful and Futile Strikes"

By BEN GITLOW.

THE New York Times of November 13 contains an editorial under the heading of "Wasteful and Futile Strikes." This editorial, dealing with the settlement reached in the cloakmakers' strike between the inside manufacturers and the union, claims the following:

That the prolonged bitter and costly struggle should never have been begun.

That compared with the original demands of the unions, the terms accepted by the union spell defeat.

That the decision of the governor's advisory commission gave virtually the demands the workers have now won; that they could have won the demands without incurring an enormous loss in wages and dislocating the industry.

That the strike was additionally unreasonable because it was directed against the ultimate best interests of the workers, because it was aimed at the so-called inside manufacturers, the larger shops where the conditions were better for the workers, where the average employment is nearly 40 per cent greater and which manufacturers were greatly handicapped by union regulation which the unions have not even attempted to apply to the smaller shops.

That the intelligent union leadership would have co-operated with these inside manufacturers instead of handicapping them against the jobber.

That the reasons behind the strike may have been union politics involving a struggle for control by the radical elements.

That the cloakmakers' strike on a smaller scale is like the British coal strike, inasmuch as the cloakmakers, like the British miners, obstinately refused to admit that the welfare of the workers is bound up with the welfare of their industry.

That to wage war against the most enlightened employers is wanton recklessness.

That there are times when it would seem that labor has outgrown the ancient slogans about the robber capitalist, labor leaders not being afraid to admit that wages go hand in hand with productivity, when along comes a garment strike or a coal strike to show that the old fallacies are still strong enough to be exploited by ignorant and selfish leaders.

It is very important that due consideration be given to this editorial. The position of the New York Times is the position not only of the capitalists, but the position of the right wing leadership. The right wing leadership opposed the calling of a strike and were in favor of accepting the decision handed down by the governor's advisory commission. It is to be expected that the very arguments used by the New York Times will be used by the right wing in order to prove that left wing leadership is romantic, impracticable, interested only in calling strikes that are costly and futile for the workers. They will claim that

a right wing leadership would have avoided a strike and peaceably brought improved conditions to the workers.

The trouble with the contentions of the New York Times and the right wing is that it neglects to consider all the factors in the situation. That it looks upon the struggle, the Times thru capitalist goggles, and the right wing leaders thru their own goggles that are dimmed with pessimism and lack of faith in the ability of the workers to fight militantly for better conditions. The cloakmakers' strike has not been ended by the agreement reached with the inside manufacturers. The cloakmakers' strike is a prolonged and bitter struggle. Could it be avoided without treacherously giving up the interests of the workers? The answer, if the facts are examined, must be emphatically no.

The decision of the governor's advisory commission appointed by the so-called friend of labor, Governor Smith of Tammany Hall, considered for two years the deplorable conditions existing in the ladies' garment industry in New York. For two long years in the interests of the bosses, it delayed passing upon the urgent demands of the workers. When their decision was made public the workers discovered that every demand of the workers was denied with the exception of a slight increase in wages. The report, which condemned in strong language the bad working conditions in the industry, the poverty and misery of the workers, then proceeded to grant the main demand raised by the employers, the right to discharge their workers at will. The inside manufacturers though they accepted the governor's commission decision as a basis for the settlement of the strike, did not indicate that they were in a mood for settlement. From the very beginning they maintained a hostile attitude to the union and clearly indicated that they were determined to use the decision of the governor's advisory commission to smash the union. Besides, the other factors in the trade were induced to ignore the union. Their position was: No recognition whatsoever of the existence of the union and the establishment of open shop conditions in the industry. For the union to have attempted to avoid the struggle would have demoralized the forces of the organization, would have aided the bosses, and would have continued in a more aggravated form the abominable conditions prevailing in the industry.

The decision of the governor's commission was the most powerful weapon placed in the hands of the bosses. Responsible directly for giving the bosses this weapon was the right wing Sigman forces, who two years ago, when they controlled the union with the advice and agreement of Morris Hillquit, placed the workers' destiny in this anti-labor commission. Opposed to militant action, disregarding the demands of the left wing which was then in opposition, the action of the right wing for two years delayed a consideration of the workers' de-

mands and gave the bosses the splendid opportunity of obtaining the weapon they long desired against the workers and the union, the right of discharge. This treachery of the right wing is to be condemned most severely and is responsible for the prolonged and bitter struggle. The left wing and the militancy of the workers is not to blame.

The Times and the right wing would like to create the impression that the strike ended in total defeat for the workers. In spite of the fact that the union had to overcome great difficulties, such as the jobber difficulty, the scabbing situation due to the development of the out-of-town markets, the open protection of scabbing by the right wing machine, the opposition of Governor Smith and his compulsory arbitration proposals, the injunctions, the wholesale arrests coupled with unprecedented police violence and brutality, and the open and deliberate holding up of relief by the right wing leaders in other unions, it nevertheless was able to register a victory for the workers. Even the retreat on the question of 10% reorganization was made only after the union had forced the manufacturers to recede from their original position by granting the union the right to review discharges and guaranteeing the workers 32 weeks' employment during the year. The demands won by the workers was a 42-hour 5-day week for 18 months, to be followed by a 40-hour week, thus establishing the 40-hour 5-day week in the industry, limitation of contractors, a better arrangement providing union supervision of the labor bureau that provides workers to the manufacturers, and an increase in wages much above that granted by the governor's commission. These are notable achievements, and their winning can only be attributed to the militancy, courage and fighting spirit of the workers. Without a struggle, the bosses could never have been forced to grant them. The left wing deserves credit that it had that courage to enter the struggle in spite of the formidable opposition of the bosses, aided by the capitalist state and the criminal strike-breaking activities of the right wing.

When the New York Times speaks about unreasonableness of the strike, that it was against the interests of the workers because it was directed against the inside manufacturers, who the Times wants us to believe are friendly to labor, one is reminded of the famous cartoons in the daily capitalist press captioned "Bug House Fables." The inside manufacturers are the richest factors in the ladies' garment industry. By the exploitation of the workers they have become exceedingly wealthy. They are not one whit concerned about the welfare of the workers. To them, like all the other factors in the trade, profits are the first consideration. The record of these manufacturers is stubborn and bitter opposition to the union. Their workers have not shared in the enormous prosperity they have enjoyed. In the negotiations with the union they made demands upon the union for speeding up, for less union control, and, in the main, for further impoverishing the workers and aggravating their exploitation. The employment in some, not all, of the inside shops may be slightly better than in the contractors' shops, the very fact that they opposed bitterly time guarantee indicates that they realize that, as bosses, they have everything to gain by maintaining in the industry a system of insecurity of employment. The left wing in raising the issue of time-guaranteed employment has taken steps to remedy a condition in the garment industry that is responsible for short periods of feverish employment and then prolonged periods of unemployment, causing great misery and suffering among the garment workers. The inside manufacturers are bosses and not lily white angels. Like shysters, regardless of consequences, they are interested only in extracting their pound of flesh from the workers. To co-operate with them would only result in selling the interests of the workers for a mess of pottage.

The New York Times does not stop here. It now takes up the argument repeated time and again by the right wing during the course of the strike. It is the same argument raised by the Jewish Daily Forward, that the left wing calls futile strikes only for political purposes. The Times insinuates that the reason behind the strike may have been union politics involving control by the radical elements. In the first place, the New York Cloakmakers' Union was in the hands of the left wing radical elements when the strike was called. It was the conservative right wing reactionary forces that, for political purposes, did everything in their power to bring about a sweeping defeat of the strike. They wanted to utilize a defeat in order to destroy the left wing leadership and regain control of the union. The left wing, in addition to leading the workers in their struggle for better working conditions, did point out to the workers the political lessons that they must learn from their struggles against the bosses. They pointed out how Governor Smith, a capitalist politician, had his commission drag out the consideration of the urgent problems raised by the workers. They pointed out how Governor Smith tried to use his power to break the strike by compulsory arbitration. They pointed out how so-called friends of labor approved the issuing of injunctions

against the workers. They pointed out how the capitalist-run Tammany administration of New York City was aiding the bosses' efforts to smash the strike by unjustifiable arrests and wanton brutality in breaking up picket lines. They tried to prove to the workers out of their experiences that whenever the workers are engaged in a struggle for better conditions that the capitalist politicians use the state against the workers. That in order to remedy this situation the workers ought to organize a labor party to fight the capitalist parties and to win state power for the workers themselves. This political activity the left wing will continue to carry on with increasing energy in the struggles the workers will engage in. To neglect this important phase of the workers' struggle is to continue in full force the oppressive strike-breaking activities of the capitalist-controlled government against the workers.

The New York Times also criticizes the cloakmakers because they did not follow a class collaboration policy. The New York Times compares the cloakmakers' strike to the coal miners' struggle in Great Britain. It blames the cloakmakers for refusing to recognize that the welfare of the workers is bound up with the welfare of the industry. It is the same argument that the right wing uses and which has been expressed most clearly by Abraham Beckerman, manager of the New York Joint Board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. Beckerman repeatedly claims that the interests of the workers is bound up with the interests of the manufacturers, that the workers must give concessions to the manufacturers in the New York market if they are to have work and better conditions.

What has been the situation in the cloak industry? The industry has been thriving and making millions in profit. In spite of the increased profits made by the bosses, the conditions of the workers have become intolerable. Unemployment is chronic, union control has been weakened, average yearly wages are far below the level of subsistence. The British miners have been fighting for eight long months to prevent a cut in wages and an increase in hours. The cloakmakers have also been fighting against an attempt of the manufacturers who are making enormous profits out of the exploitation of the cloakmakers to smash the union and create a more intolerable situation for the workers.

The cloak manufacturers are, like the British coal barons, interested in

lowering the living standards of the workers. The cloakmakers' strike proves conclusively that the welfare of the bosses is not bound up with the welfare of the workers. The cloakmakers' strike, if it proves anything, proves that the only way in which the workers can prevent the encroachments of the bosses and win some of the prosperity of the industry for themselves in improved conditions is thru unionization and militant struggles.

The Times, at the end of the editorial, becomes indignant. It is gratifying to note that this powerful expression of American capitalism is indignant over the cloakmakers' strike, and particularly the left wing leadership. The indignation of the Times is shared by the whole right wing bureaucratic machine in control of the trade union movement.

The cloakmakers' war is wanton recklessness, exclaims the Times. Enlightened labor has outgrown the idea that capitalists are robbers. Labor leaders are not now afraid to say that wages go hand in hand with productivity. The Times agrees with the position of the right wing for co-operating to increase productivity at the expense of the workers. Increased productivity means the more intensive exploitation of the workers. The cloakmakers won an increase in wages. The furriers also won substantial increases in wages without agreeing to speed up production. The general conditions of all the workers in the industry were thereby improved. In contradistinction we have the Amalgamated situation in New York. This organization in the men's garment industry agreed to increased productivity on the part of the workers. The result has been increased profits for the manufacturers, intensive speed-up in the shops, that is undermining the health of the workers, hundreds of workers being deprived of their jobs because less workers are required to produce more, reduction in wages and increased suffering and misery for the workers. The workers have nothing to gain from the advice of the New York Times. The class collaboration policy and wage increase policy based upon increased productivity advocated by the A. F. of L. bureaucracy is against the workers' interests. The cloakmakers' strike has vindicated the position of the left wing. The cloakmakers' strike was not futile. The cloakmakers' strike was a demonstration that thru unity and militant struggles only the workers can maintain their positions, and march forward to great progress.

Letters From Our Readers

On Henry Ford Again.

To the Editor:—In the St. Paul Pioneer Press of Oct. 6, Elbert H. Gary is alleged to pronounce Ford's five-day week uneconomic as follows: "I shall require further proof before I am satisfied that any man or any number of men can do as much work in five days of eight hours each as could be secured in six days of eight hours each."

Some light may be thrown on Mr. Gary's process of reasoning if we quote an interview printed in the New York Times of Jan. 25, 1925. Listen to the dulcet tones of Mr. Gary and his philosophy. "Fear of losing his job is making the man in the shop toe the line. At first glance the average individual will say there is something very ugly and inhuman in that statement. It isn't ugly and it isn't inhuman. It is the only solution. Fear is the word I used. I might with equal truth have said competition. They both mean the same in industry. You may call it fear. You may call it competition."

The Puritans were wont to add "of the Lord" to make it more binding.

There is no doubt but that Mr. Gary is extremely religious and very un-Christian.

It is probable from the standpoint of business Messrs. Gary and Ford are like Hendrik Van Loon's statesman "with the warm, personal, loving feelings of a slide rule and the cash register."

Mr. Gary is the giant-killer of labor leaders and it is rumored that when the Little Red Riding Hoods of unemployment secure jobs in Ford's plants they are heard to murmur occasionally, "What big eyes you've got, Grandma!"

The writer has just finished reading Ford's "Today and Tomorrow" and it is most interesting. It may be epoch-making but the writer considers it "old stuff" from an idealistic standpoint. It dates back to Aristotle if not earlier. "He first of the nationalized inanimate tool as an implement of labor" and dared fancy it might displace human slavery. Franklin, Kropotkin, Steinmetz and a long list of others have advocated the same doctrines that Ford dares assert really work out. But Mr. Ford hampered by legal restrictions and economics based on "pecuniary and honorific emulation" really produces the goods and having the money stands a fair show of demonstrating that of which Aristotle dreamed if he is sincere. The government intervened to prevent public knowledge of how much money there may be in running railroads right.

The writer never was affiliated with socialism, Communism, or anarchism, but he has heard or read many appeals. During the world war

he was in the environment of the University of Illinois. He became a member of the Socialist Study Club an organization composed of socialist and non-socialist members. He has repeatedly heard there all the alleged advanced ideas which Mr. Ford apparently champions in the interest of himself and the laborer if he is acting in good faith. He recalls the reiteration of order, cleanliness, up-to-date machinery and methods, standardization of machinery and goods and the necessity of interesting the engineering fraternity. Mr. Newell of the engineering staff, in government employ I believe, was of the opinion that it was a hopeless task until the inventors, engineers, and mechanics attained a broader vision.

But the rift in the lute was that such ideas were not considered respectable. The writer recalls with amusement being careless of convention that certain relatives, graduates of or affiliated with directly or indirectly with some of the colleges might hide a tolerant smile when he insisted on his Sunday visit to the club session just off the campus. This was distinctly "verboten" to any aspirant for advancement in position or prestige. Members were assumed to be cranks, free-lovers, Communists or anarchists if regularly attending. At least this was the opinion in great degree of the sanctified and sanctimonious faculty members possessing influence.

Our entry into the world war furnished the long hoped for excuse. Various faculty members and sympathizers with progressive that were dismissed including noted men and against the protest of fair minded conservatives. Puritanism of the dogmatic type prevailed. But the teachings heard in the war-time closed Socialist Study Club as to wages, hours, desirability of intermittent change of task, steady employment, leisure, play; mismanagement of businesses and finance, co-operative selling to employees and public, etc., etc., seem similar to the apparent conclusions put forth by Henry Ford in "Today and Tomorrow." Henry has a long purse and he may make it respectable.—Joel Henry Greene, 1419 Grand Ave., St. Paul.

N. W. Parents' League Will Meet Tonight

An important meeting of the Parents' League of the Northwest Side will be held Thursday, Nov. 13, at 3301 La Moine St. There will be election of officers. Carl Haessler, chief editor of the Federated Press will speak on "Who controls the schools and why."

Trade of Mexico

and the increase in Mexican trade—the United States of all other nations combined—the tremendous profit and mineral industries—silver, copper, lead and underlying the Mexican policy of the state department government especially at a time like the present the land laws which make the natural resources the

Therefore, the export trade is the real one that has given increasing purchasing power to the Mexican people, and means a great deal more to the final economic development of Mexico than the great figures reached by the oil and mining industries, altho for revenue purposes it means a great deal to the government of Mexico.

The principal customer of Mexico is the United States, as in 1925 she bought \$516,862,614 worth of staple products.

THE importance of the principal Mexican ports in regard to the total amount of trade exported thru them is as follows:

Tampico	\$400,981,844
Vera Cruz	72,283,623
Laredo	44,312,192
Progreso	31,706,455
Ciudad Juarez	24,941,655
Nogales	23,722,622
Agua Prieta	18,258,001
Coatzacoales	12,247,928
Naco	9,882,286
Mazatlan	7,055,026

The importance of the Mexican ports in connection with the import trade is as follows:

Vera Cruz	107,558,136
Laredo	80,258,330
Tampico	66,810,870
Ciudad Juarez	21,459,337
Progreso	19,052,936
Nogales	16,352,336
P. Negra	13,327,884
Mexico City	26,029,853

The total amounts by countries selling to Mexico are as follows:

United States	\$274,495,561
United Kingdom	36,392,124
Germany	29,867,999
France	20,907,106
Italy	3,008,943
Spain	8,131,331
Belgium	2,999,288

The importance of the countries

buying from Mexico is as follows:

United States	\$516,862,614
United Kingdom	52,115,531
Germany	33,018,743
Cuba	19,058,786
France	11,743,292
Holland	10,751,731
Argentina	9,521,264
Brazil	7,256,838
Belgium	8,432,838

COUNTRIES that buy more than sell to Mexico—United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Cuba, Holland, Argentina, Brazil and Belgium.

Countries that sell more than buy from Mexico—France, Italy, Spain, Austria, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, China, Japan, Dominican Republic, Sweden, Switzerland.

The export trade of Mexico in 1925 by continent was as follows:

North America	\$520,530,360
Central America	7,003,122
South America	19,909,443
West Indies	22,382,994
Total in American continent	\$569,825,913
Europe	111,715,763
Asia	661,456
Africa & Oceania	281,700

THE most noticeable thing in the export trade of Mexico is the mineral production. From January to April, 1925, there was a production of 932,427 kilograms of silver, 14,059,924 of lead, and 6,390,832 of zinc.

During the same period of this year the production has been of 1,004,676 kilograms of silver, 16,176,463 of lead, and 28,201,286 of zinc.

Mexico has the first place in the world as producer of silver, the second place in lead production, fifth place in production of copper and, due to the great demand and the high price paid for zinc, Mexico will soon be in the first place regarding the export of this metal.