

THE UNITED FRONT IN THE OHIO STRIKE

By TOM JOHNSON

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IN the Illinois and Ohio fields 115,000 miners are locked out or on strike under the leadership of the reactionary union, the United Mine Workers of America. In Western Pennsylvania four mines at Avella, including one of the Pittsburgh Terminal Coal Corporation mines, (the UMWA has an agreement with this company), are engaged in a strike which until last week was completely dominated by the UMWA. The largest mine in Central Pennsylvania is on strike under their leadership.

Two circumstances contribute to the development of local struggles such as the Avella and Portage strikes, under UMWA leadership. On the one hand the union is striving desperately to rehabilitate itself in the eyes of the miners even though this forces the leadership into calling local strikes (with the entirely conscious aim of latter betraying them).

On the other hand the UMWA is striving to raise its prestige as a strike breaking agency with the operators by taking over the leadership of the growing number of local struggles (which, as was the case in Ohio, may be transformed over night into mass strikes) developing from below in order to betray them and thus prove its usefulness to the operators.

Despite the recent heroic struggles under its leadership in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky, the National Miners Union today finds itself relatively isolated from the present strikes and in grave danger of this isolation continuing in the wave of strikes unquestionably maturing in Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. It cannot be brought home too sharply that today our union is in imminent danger of being seriously weakened in its own stronghold, the Western Pennsylvania and Ohio fields.

There is only one means whereby such a catastrophe can be prevented; that is by a stubborn struggle for our independent leadership of present and coming strike struggles through the correct application of the united front from below. Today the tactic of the united front is literally a life and death question for our union.

After several years of unproductive work had demonstrated to all but the blind the bankruptcy of our sectarian policy in those fields such as Illinois and the Anthracite which are completely dominated by the UMWA, we have at last succeeded in working out (or rather are in the process of working out) the correct methods and forms for the application of our united front tactic.

As frequently happens with us, the reaction from the sharp self-criticism of our former policy of building, or trying to build locals of the National Miners Union in these fields at the expense of work in the UMWA, has led to some mistakes amounting in practice to the complete elimination of the role of the NMU from our agitation and propaganda. However, on the whole it may be said that we have now seized hold of the correct policy in these fields and that our comrades are energetically building a strong left wing opposition inside the UMWA which is already mobilizing masses of miners for struggle for concrete demands under our leadership.

The Ohio Strike.

Unfortunately the same cannot be said for our work in Eastern Ohio. Here, up until the present strike, the UMWA had little or no sympathy or mass influence and even less organizational strength. The miners of one mine of the Hanna coal Co. struck first, largely as a result of a leaflet issued by the NMU calling for struggle against a recent wage cut. In other words the strike actually started as a result of the work of our union.

Our comrades were present at the first meeting of the strikers. Again they repeated the old mistake of merely making agitational speeches and failed to even elect a Strike Committee. Following this first meeting our comrades simply stepped out of the picture and left the strikers to their own devices for several days.

The UMWA promptly seized hold of this opportunity, sent in speakers and organizers and took the leadership of this local strike right out of our hands. This was bad enough but it did not end there. The strike spread and with it spread the influence of the UMWA, until the field was solidly struck and as solidly under the

leadership of the reformists.

The line of our comrades in the union, and to a lesser extent the Party, leadership in Ohio has been one of complete capitulation in the face of the difficulties with which they are confronted. Our comrades have developed several theories to justify their passivity.

No. 1. "It is impossible to take over the leadership of the Ohio Strike."

No. 2. "The strike will be lost anyway. Therefore, let the UMWA continue to lead it. After it is betrayed the miners will realize the strike breaking role of the UMWA and will flock into our union. If we take over the leadership now and the strike is lost the miners will hold us responsible."

No. 3. "The miners will remain in the UMWA. What is necessary is to liquidate the NMU entirely and to build an opposition movement in the UMWA in Ohio."

To take the last of these "theories" first. The miners have little or no confidence in the UMWA. They are following UMWA leadership in this strike for one reason only—Because of the failure of our union to really root itself in the mines following the last strike and to develop there local struggles for the most pressing needs of the miners. The fact that 15,000 miners are on strike under UMWA leadership is not to be attributed to the miners confidence in the UMWA. It is due to our passivity and to nothing else. The miners have no confidence in the UMWA. They follow it half-heartedly today because in practice our union refused to give them adequate leadership in the struggle for their most urgent and burning demands.

In this situation some of our comrades are attempting to justify a continuance of this same criminal passivity with this "theory" that we must liquidate the NMU and work only within the rejuvenated UMWA. This "theory" has nothing in common with the Bolshevik policy of

determined struggle for the leadership of the masses; it is a policy of complete capitulation in the face of a difficult situation which is admittedly largely of our own making.

As for "theory" number 2: It is not true that "the strike will be lost anyway". The Ohio strike can yet achieve a partial, if not a complete victory, providing the strikers themselves take the leadership of the struggle into their own hands under our general guidance and put into effect our policies of militant mass struggle.

Miners Lose—UMWA Wins

If we continue our present inactivity the strike will surely be betrayed by the UMWA fakers insofar as the interests and the demands of the strikers are concerned. But this does not mean that it will surely be lost from the standpoint of the UMWA leaders. Nor does this necessarily mean that the UMWA will be smashed in Ohio. The miners were defeated in the last strike in Scotts Run, W. Va., but the UMWA, which led the strike, was victorious:

It succeeded in signing the famous "out scab the scabs" agreement whereby the miners of Scotts Run are chained to the lowest scale in the state, 22½ cents a ton with \$1.50 check off to the UMWA each month.

Lee Hall, the president of District Six, has already announced that the UMWA stands ready to conclude an agreement on the present terms offered by the newly formed Operators Association, providing the operators agree to the check off. These terms are 35 cents a ton and \$3.20 for day work. If the strike is terminated on the basis of these terms certainly the miners will have been defeated, for these terms represent a substantial wage cut. If the operators take Hall's offer, and there are some indications that they will, the strike will be a victory for Hall and his fellow mis-leaders and it will chain the miners of Ohio to the UMWA.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

The Struggle for the Scottsboro Boys in Germany

By J. LOUIS ENGDAHL.

DUSSELDORF, Germany (by mail).—The Catholic regime in Cologne, where the great Cologne Cathedral stands sentinel near the central railroad station as if to bar entrance to any who are unwelcome, joined the socialist regime in Altona-Hamburg in the effort to silence the appeal of the Scottsboro mother, Ada Wright. The meeting here was forbidden.

Three other meetings, however, were carried through here in the great machine building industrial center around Dusseldorf. But even here obstacles had to be overcome in the Lower Rhineland. The Socialist Center (Catholic) combination that rules in Dusseldorf, had refused the use of any municipal hall for the Scottsboro protest, and all the large halls are municipally owned.

Instead of taking a small hall the first meeting was held in the Germania Hall, of the suburb, Obarkassel, under close police surveillance. This meeting held on a Sunday, was marked by an unusually large attendance of children who took a keen interest in the detailed translation of everything said by the Scottsboro mother, Ada Wright. Throughout the Lower Rhineland the children have been writing letters to President Hoover, drawing up resolutions and petitions of their own. One of these letters read at the meeting was as follows:

Dear President Hoover:—In America everything is said to be so beautiful, as my uncle has very often told me, and as we have been taught in the schools, that there is much more freedom in your country than there is here in Germany.

Dear President, my father has read to me from the newspapers, that you are going to permit the Negro children to be put to death. That would not be good from you. What have these children done? The police here in Germany is very severe with us. But they do not put children to death. Let the poor Negro chil-

dren live, because their fathers and mothers will shed many tears for them. We here in Germany would be glad to hear that you are for justice. If I should happen to come to America, then I shall visit you. Please write me if you have received my letter."

Some of the difficulties in carrying through mass meetings in Germany were revealed in Dusseldorf. Special permission, with a special stamp of the police department, had to be secured for the distribution of leaflets. Any distributor of leaflets who did not carry his permit was liable to three months imprisonment. Placards, handbills and other publicity was not allowed to carry any slogans, not even such an appeal as "We Call Upon Workers to Come to the Meeting!" Instead only the name of the speaker and what he is to talk about. I was not allowed to speak because my name had not been reported to the police.

The Obarkassel meeting was presided over by Carl Jannack, secretary of the International Red Aid for the Lower Rhineland district with its 13,000 members.

We were the guests of the workers of Dusseldorf in the evening at an unusual performance given by the Workers' Singing Society in the State Theatre. There were 400 singers, men, women and children, who presented through song and declamation the struggles of the Communist propagandists.

Spies and Terror "Philanthrop"

By F. B. M.

To the Daily Worker:

DETROIT, Mich.—The Ford Motor Co. is conducting an intensified reign of terror on their