

TAMPICO STRIKE LEADER TELLS DAILY WORKER OF FIGHT WITH BIG BRITISH OIL INTERESTS

By JAY LOVESTONE.
(Special to the Daily Worker.)

MEXICO CITY, Mexico, April 30.—“We will fight till we win and we are bent on victory at all costs.” This is the message sent, thru the DAILY WORKER, to the workers and poor farmers of the United States by Gregorio Furrubiates, leader of the Mexican workers, now striking against the powerful British oil corporation at Tampico, the El Aguila.

Gregorio Furrubiates is a genuine rebel, a proletarian fighter of the first order, enjoys the whole-hearted confidence of the workers, and is a communist. The following sidelights on the gigantic strike now raging in Tampico were given your correspondent by Comrade Furrubiates while he was in Mexico City as a member of a committee of striking workers to see President Obregon and tell him that his arbitration commission had better act without delay or else the strikers would be compelled to take matters into their own hands against El Aguila Oil Corporation.

Electrical Workers Strike First.

“The strike began as a strike of 150 electricians employed by the Tampico Light and Power Company, of which Mr. J. S. Leach was manager. Mr. Leach has since been expelled from Mexico by the government for his persistently hostile and troublesome attitude towards the working men.

“The strike of the electricians lasted five months. Mr. Leach at one time succeeded in rounding up 125 scabs. But we soon gave them such a worthwhile education and made such an example out of them that it imbued the oil workers of El Aguila, which was using the light and power of the struck electrical company, with a spirit of magnificent solidarity. A mass spontaneous organization wave swept their ranks. When it was their turn to strike, the oil workers came out 100 per cent. And today these scabs can't get a job anywhere and are ostracised by all workers everywhere.

“For the first 12 days of the electrical workers' strike there were neither police nor military on guard. There were no scabs to protect. The oil capitalists then resorted to a trick to fool the government into rushing soldiers to the strike zone by telling it that the workers had taken over the factories. But when the soldiers came there were no scabs to look out for.

“The men, women and children all lined up solidly behind the electrical workers, who did take over the plant when they struck. As a matter of fact, the workers ran the plant very well and made a profit of 5,000 pesos a day. Soon the electrical workers won their strike. They then declared that they will supply El Aguila power only upon the request and recommendation of the Oil Workers' Union. The capitalists then went after the oil workers. Here is where the present serious strike troubles began.

Oil Workers Locked Out.

“No sooner were the oil workers locked out and forced to strike in self defense against the attacks made on them by El Aguila, than they raised the red flag over the plant and threw a guard of working men about it. Immediately the British Corporation appealed to the Association of Oil Producers in Mexico for help.”

At this point your correspondent reminded the strike leader that this was the same outfit of international oil interests that once occupied offices in 347 Fifth Avenue, New York City, and dictated the policies of Washington and Mexico City at a time when the relations between the two governments were intensely strained. This clique of oil magnates even had its own army in Mexico, led by one named Pelaez.

This reminder served to cause Furrubiates to state that it was precisely the knowledge of those facts that has aroused the ire of great masses even outside the ranks of the oil workers. The strikers are convinced that the sole object of El Aguila in appealing to the Association of Oil Producers is to invoke the powerful influence of the latter on the United States government, which in turn, will bring to bear heavy pressure on the Mexican government to terminate the strike favorably for the El Aguila cor-

poration.

Then the stocky, solidly built strike leader went on to say: “Yes, the government is pledged to force arbitration. In view of the British company having the international oil interests acting for it, we will very likely be compelled to declare a general strike in the port of Tampico.

“When the company tried to break our ranks by firing 150 of our men because of the stoppage of power incurred by the electricians' strike, then it set the house on fire. The lockout gave tremendous impetus to our agitation for organization amongst the oil workers. Continued firing of oil workers by El Aguila boosted our campaign still more. Soon a committee of oil workers called upon the El Aguila and demanded that the lockout cease immediately and that all the workers be given back their jobs. This appeal of ours fell on deaf ears. Today from 2,075 to 3,000 of the firm are organized and striking very well. Only a few clerks have been left out. All other workers are organized industrially.

“Our union seeks to have the British Oil Corporation comply with the labor laws of the country which provides for an 8-hour working day, sanitary conditions of employment, accident insurance and three months' pay if discharged without cause. We have been fired without cause. We have been struggling for more than a month.”

Great Solidarity of Workers.

Thereupon the writer put this question to Furrubiates: How do the rest of the workers feel about your fight? To this Furrubiates replied:

“All the workers of Tampico are rallying to the oil laborers. A manifesto pledging us their full support has just been issued. Inspiring solidarity is evidenced among the railroad workers, the red anarcho-syndicalists, and even the yellow unions. Substantial material help is being rendered us. The Tampico workers are giving us 5,000 pesos weekly. The Butchers' Union is giving us three cows a day.

“The organized workers have built dramatic clubs giving plays, having proletarian class themes only. The unorganized workers are helping us financially by patronizing these plays. One play is given every week. This nets the strikers at least 1,500 pesos weekly. Just to show you how the other workers feel about our fight, let me read to you the following telegram I received a few moments ago from my union, The Oil Workers' Union of Tampico.” Furrubiates went on to read:

“We can sustain strike indefinite time. Electricians are aiding 1,000 pesos weekly; street car men, 700; small merchants society, 200; the butchers, three cows a day. Workers of this port are ready for general strike if necessary. Delegate Central and South American organizations tell us will boycott El Aguila products if strike is not settled.”

“Out of 2,300 workers there is not a scab on the job today.

Force Government To Act.

“When we were tipped off that the company was planning to fill several of its tankers, we telegraphed President Obregon and demanded that he order the Commander of the local military force to prevent the scabs from handling the oil. Our demand brought back the following telegraphic reply from Obregon:

“Your attentive message received. Have already ordered the Secretary of Industry and Labor thru his delegated representative to guard the observance of the labor laws and prevent the resumption of work as long as the conflict has not been terminated by the authorities in charge of arbitration. Respectfully, Obregon, President of the Republic.”

This telegram was sent on April 14th.

Works Completely Tied Up.

What has been the condition of the strike since then? was my next question. The spokesman of the oil workers replied:

“Since that day El Aguila has been absolutely tied up. In the midst of the strike we learned that some English workers were loading oil for the firm in another port. We compelled the government to stop this. Obregon has declared that if the manager of the company does not present himself before the Arbitration Commission, the decision will be rendered without him. But El Aguila has so far refused to send its representative because it continually maintains that its case is no longer in its own hands but is now solely in the hands of the Association of Oil Producers.

“We workers expect the government to compel El Aguila to adhere to the Constitutional provisions regarding the 8-hour day, insurance, the right to organize, etc.

The Strikers' Demands.

“We have thirty-three demands.

WAR SECRETARY APOLOGIZES TO ANTI-WAR WOMEN

Withdraws Offending Circular

(By The Federated Press)

BUFFALO, May 5.—Women peace workers have made the U. S. War Department eat its words and withdraw its attack on them it was revealed at the National League of Women Voters' convention in session in Buffalo. Secretary of War Weeks, following protest of league members, has called in an anti-pacifist poster distributed for propagandist purposes by General Fries, Chemical warfare service. The poster was headed “The Socialist Pacifist Movement in America is an Absolute Part of International Socialism.”

The convention of women were furious when President Maude Wood Park recounted the government's attack on their organization. Some delegates objected that their constitutional right to work for peace should be questioned by the government. Others resented the coupling of the league's name on the war department poster with more radical organizations.

The peace activities of the league will continue. A committee was appointed to call a conference of seventy-five national and local peace societies and all other organizations having peace programs. On the committee is the honorary president, Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt.

A sugary letter from President Coolidge did not altogether quiet the wrath of the women voters. After regretting his inability to address the convention and praising the advent of women as voters as a “tremendously important step in the evolution of democracy,” Coolidge said. “I am sure that thru the agencies of such organizations as your own the fullest conception of their duties and obligations will be carried to the women of the nation.”

Secretary Weeks expressed regret for the poster and announced its withdrawal in a letter read to the delegates.

One of our main grievances is that workers injured while on the job be taken care of as the Constitution provides. We will not compromise any of the rights guaranteed us by the Constitution. Other demands than the enforcement of the Constitutional provisions, we may be ready to arbitrate.

“At least 2,100 workers are already on strike. We are all set for a general strike in a few days to include all the workers in Tampico. That would mean taking seven thousand workers off their jobs. All the petroleum fields are agitated. The laborers are preparing to organize a big general union of all oil workers. There is a spontaneous movement in their ranks for a Federation of Oil Workers. There are no less than 15,000 oil workers now being organized who are ready to tie up all the oil fields of the country.”

McDonald Aid Sought.

The writer then suggested that the strikers might consider the advisability of cabling the McDonald Government and demanding that it should not support El Aguila in this fight. Furrubiates gladly accepted the recommendation. Since then the Tampico strikers have cabled McDonald.

Samuel Gompers was also appealed to, thru the Pan-American Labor Federation, to help the strikers against the oil capitalists' association. A general appeal has been issued to all workers, asking for the support of the strikers. A boycott against all El Aguila products has already been declared.

Workers To Fight On.

Replying to the writer's inquiry as to how long the strikers could hold out, Furrubiates declared: “Why, we are ready to go to all lengths, appeal to other channels, and can stay out indefinitely. El Aguila cannot afford to allow its machinery to remain idle longer than two months. Besides, the American Doheny Oil interests are its fierce competitors and may be planning to take away some of its business. Of course, if these competing oil interests show signs of helping El Aguila, we will attend to them also.”

BUFFALO, May 5.—“Other nations are suspicious of our intentions and are justified in being so,” declared Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, former president International Suffrage Alliance, to the National League of Women Voters' convention in Buffalo.

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