

PENNSYLVANIA LABOR IS FACING MANY PROBLEMS

State Federation to Meet at Erie

By GEORGE PAPCUN.
(Special to The Daily Worker)

ERIE, Pa., May 10.—The State Federation of labor convention opens here May 11, at the Elks Hall. There will be several very important issues which mean life or death to different labor unions in Pennsylvania.

The chamber of commerce has demonstrated to the workers how it tries to get influence in this state, especially in the Pittsburgh district, where it is making a big drive against the United Mine Workers.

First, it carried on a "Forward Week" in Pittsburgh from Feb. 13th to the 19th, trying to show the need of increased membership and increased income in order that it may be better able to aid in the fight

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against the labor movement in the state.

It also tried to show how Pittsburgh occupies a strategic position in the world of industry and trade. In this forward week it showed that 60% of the ammunition in the world war was gotten from Pittsburgh. At the same time this "Forward Week" was going on, the chamber of commerce started a membership drive in Pittsburgh. It secured 3,000 new members in the one week. Now the body has 6,530 members in good standing.

This shows the necessity for the labor movement of Pennsylvania awakening and starting its own "Forward Week."

Instead of showing the wonderful things that the workers have made to make Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania what it is, the labor movement must show to the world at large what Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania really is and means. During the chamber of commerce week, nothing was said of the 2,209 deaths that occurred in building up these industries of Pennsylvania, nor did it say anything of the 52,000 miners incapacitated by accidents in the bituminous and anthracite coal fields. It is up to the State Federation of Labor to see that this kind of campaign is started, and that this campaign be utilized for organizing the hundreds of thousands of workers who are now unorganized in Pennsylvania. The excuse that the Federation of Labor has no jurisdiction over organizing the unorganized workers of this state must be done away with at this convention. This convention must be utilized for putting real fighting spirit into the workers of Pennsylvania. It must demand that not only an organizational drive be started in Pennsylvania, but that the American Federation of Labor must immediately start drives to organize the unorganized workers of the United States.

Certain basic industries such as steel and coal should be concentrated on. The delegates that will go to the next American Federation of Labor convention must not only introduce resolution, but must fight to have these resolutions adopted and put into effect.

The drive among the miners of Pennsylvania in the coke region and in the Latrobe and Irwin fields will be one way to check the open shop drive and the slashing of wages in which the Pittsburgh chamber of commerce is taking such an active part.

Not only in Pennsylvania must this drive be started but in West Virginia among the coal miners to organize the unorganized with the backing of the entire labor movement of the United States, for we find that Kentucky and West Virginia produce 70 per cent of the bituminous coal that is used in the United States. It means that as long as the West Virginia and Kentucky fields are the paradise of the non-union coal barons, just as long will the coal miners of Western Pennsylvania, Central Pennsylvania and Illinois and other union fields be starved and just so long will the coal operators try to smash the United Mine Workers in the different territories where they now have their foot hold.

The key to the situation is to "Organize the Unorganized," of West Virginia, Connellsville Coke Region and Kentucky. At the same time the labor movement must immediately start an intensive organizational campaign to organize the thousands of steel workers, especially in the state of Pennsylvania. We find that the Amalgamated Steel Workers' Association has spent \$50,000 in trying to organize the steel workers but has got only 100 new members for all the money that was spent in the organization drive. And in the same period it lost three hundred members. The workers of the United States must learn even from the chamber of commerce how to conduct organization drives.

The important thing that the Erie convention must consider is the organization of the young workers in the different industries of Pennsylvania. The young workers have been used by employers as a means of breaking down the trade unions and as a means of scabbing on strikers in different industries. The majority of the young workers are employed in the semi-skilled and unskilled work. They are practically all unorganized. They must immediately be organized and agitation must be carried on among them in the different forms, such as calling of youth conferences where specific demands will be brot up and discussed and ways and means of fighting for these demands be worked out. Local unions must take up specific youth problems at their meetings, in trying to bring in the youth and making the union meetings more interesting. The above constitutes only some of the things which the State Federation of Labor convention at Erie must consider.