

ZEIGLER MINERS TRIAL OPENS AT BENTON MONDAY

Farrington Machine Frames Militants

BY MAX SHACHTMAN

(By I. L. D. Press Service.)

ZEIGLER, Ill., Nov. 27.—Twenty union miners in Zeigler face from one to fourteen years in the state penitentiary for the crime of having militantly fought against the combined forces of the Farrington machine, the coal operators, and the ku klux klan.

Their trial, which opens Monday at the county seat in Benton, is based on one of the flimsiest and most brazen frame-ups known in the history of the labor movement.

The defendants, headed by Henry and Frank Corbishly, and Matt Crnovich, are well known thruout the entire United Mine Workers' district as militant fighters for the needs and interests of the coal diggers. For years they have carried on a courageous struggle against the powerful Bell and Zoller mine company on the one hand and against the Farrington-Lewis machine and their treasonable policies on the other, with a consistent fight against ku klux klanism in between.

Farrington Frame-up.

The struggle has centered around the right of the 1300 members of the Zeigler local of the union, 992, to elect its own officers and to elect them legally. For the past six years every local election has been stolen or destroyed by the Farrington machine and its tools. Special organizers, among them the notorious William Hogan and "Lige" Walker, have been here doing nothing but drawing their pay and disrupting the union. In April of this year, Henry Corbishly was elected president at a special election held under the supervision of four international board members. In the regular annual election which followed in June, Corbishly and all of his associates were returned by an average vote of five to one, with the klan candidates completely routed.

Always on the lookout for the miners' interests, the local's executive committee was instrumental in putting an assistant check weighman into the mine to see to it that the miners were not cheated by the company mine manager who saw to it that the cars were moved over the weighing scales so rapidly that it was very difficult for one checkweighman to keep track of them. Frustrated in its attempt to

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hoodwink the miners, the company refused to permit the assistant to enter the mine, with the result that the regular weighman declined to stay on the job because he was unable to weigh the coal correctly.

Miners Walk Out.

Thirteen hundred miners then walked out of the Bell and Zoller mine. That same evening, at a mass meeting in the park, Corbishly induced the resentful miners to return to work next morning and permit the sub-district officials to handle the case in accordance with the contract. The men returned pending this settlement.

Four days later the dispute was settled! Settled by D. B. Cobb, vice-president of the sub-district, in accordance with every detail of the demands of the company! These demands were simply that the local president, Corbishly, the vice-president, Oscar Farthing, the pit committeeman, Steve Meanovich, and the check weighman, Pete Blazin, be removed from office. Mr. Cobb complied.

Immediately, the mines were once more emptied. Not all the urgings of the deposed officials could induce the men to return. The miners demanded that their officials be replaced in office. On the second night of the "wild-cat" strike, Lon Fox, president of the sub-district, came to a special meeting which he had ordered called for the purpose of electing new officers and calling off the strike. Almost 800 miners packed the hall, listened to Fox, Cobb and Babbington, a district board member, and firmly refused to elect new officers or to return to work.

Klansmen Shoot Miners.

The meeting was adjourned. In one section of the hall, as the miners were leaving, a fight started supposedly over a remark made by old Bert Farthing, who had supported the Klan up until two or three months prior to the strike. Two Wilson brothers, both known to be klansmen, struck him to the floor. Young Farthing, who was at the door, hurried to the aid of his father. A general scrap followed during which Cobb pulled a blackjack and attempted to use it. He was knocked down and the weapon taken from him.

After most of the men had left the hall, Alec Hargis an another well-known klansman and a thoroly discredited member of the local, appeared in the doorway with a .38 automatic in his hand. Looking straight at one of the progressive and best liked miners, Mike Sarovich, he fired a shot which went thru Mike's abdomen and lodged in the hip of Hezza Hindman, a sub-district board member who was behind Sarovich.

Whitewash Murderer.

To whitewash Hargis and to frame up the local miners' officials is the purpose of the combined forces of reaction. Hargis who was found by the coroner's jury to have fired the shot that killed Mike Sarovich was completely freed by an obliging grand jury. The charge was instead fastened on Frank Corbishly who was not even in the hall when the shot was fired. The two Wilson's who started the fight and Cobb who tried to use a blackjack are scot free. But 20 miners are being held for trial on the charges, made by Cobb, of assault with intent to murder, and conspiracy to murder.

To Stifle Opposition.

The aim of the Farrington-Fox machine in this frame-up is to kill off all opposition in the miners' union to the traitorous policies pursued by the machine. Thompson, Watt, Tom Parry, Joe Angelo and others are already expelled; more are slated for the same fate. The machine wants no opposition to it in the unions and at the next convention. Farrington uses cunning judgement. An honest and militant miner expelled here, another one somewhere else, and so on, with the hope that soon no one will be left to open his mouth against this infamous scoundrel and his clique.

The Zeigler frame-up is a case of honest working class fighters who are struggling against a solid bloc and under great handicaps. Thruout the county the rank and file miners have organized the Franklin County Defense Committee, with Victor Cernich of Christopher, Ill., as treasurer. They are appealing for immediate aid in the form of donations. The International Labor Defense and every progressive labor organization is cooperating with the defendants.