

ILG Thrifty -- with Members' Vacation Pay

By Rose Wortis

The annual financial report of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union has once more been released with much fanfare about the financial responsibility of the Dubinsky leadership. Strange to say, while the *New York Times* and other metropolitan newspapers devoted full columns to this report, the union publication *Justice*, which appeared in the same week, did not even print a summary. Instead there was an announcement that the report had been given to the local unions.

I want to deal with two items in the voluminous report, which gives many detailed figures but shed little light on where a good many of the millions collected from the workers was spent. The items are the health-and-vacation fund and contributions to relief and labor organizations.

In unions such as the furriers, furniture workers, jewelry, hatters, the vacation fund is paid directly to the workers as a regular week or two weeks paid vacation or on the basis of the amount paid by the employers. This is not the case in the ILGWU.

Here the leadership saw in the health and vacation fund (given to the workers in lieu of a wage increase) an opportunity to accumulate a huge reserve fund at the expense of the workers. Thus, out of a fund of \$8,000,000 collected in 1944, only \$3,000,000 was paid out to the workers. Instead of receiving the full sum contributed by the employers which in the dress industry amounted to an average of \$71, the workers received between \$24 and \$38, leaving a reserve of \$5,000,000 in the union treasury to be used at the discretion of the union leadership.

In the 1945 reports, the leadership boasts of collecting the total sum of \$13,103,545 for the health and vacation fund, an increase of 62½ percent.

In view of this increase and the reserve left over from 1944, and also the increase in the cost of living—especially the cost of vacation—it was to be expected that at least this year the workers would get the money that actually belongs to them as part of their earnings. But the leaders of the International, many of whom spend their summers in fine

resorts and their winter vacations in the best hotels of Miami, broke their hearts, as the workers would say, and gave them a miserly increase of \$10 each.

Out of more than 13 million, a little more than seven million was paid out, with close to six million dollars again withheld from the workers. While the workers have to skimp and cannot afford a good vacation after a hard year's work, the reserve fund has been increased to \$11,000,000 as a result of arbitrary rules worked out by the leadership.

"RELIEF" ANGLE

Now, as to the contributions to relief funds:

According to the report, the International made contributions aggregating close to a million dollars to various relief, charity and labor organizations.⁸ There is not the slightest indication in the report who the organizations are and how much was contributed to each.

The report hides the fact that the greatest part of this money was in reality given not for relief but to the reactionary activities of the various cliques and organ-

izations controlled by the Dubinsky Social Democrats.

The report to the 1944 convention gives some indications as to who these organizations are. There is the Jewish Labor Committee, whose main activities have been disruption of the unity of the labor movements in European countries and support of "the underground of Poland," the same fascist underground bands who are today carrying through pogroms against the Jewish people. Then there are publications such as the *New Leader*, the *Volkszeitung*, the *Vestnick*, all Social-Democratic clique propaganda sheets whose main purpose is instigation of war against the Soviet Union. The American Labor Conference on International Affairs, headed by the notorious enemy of the Soviet Union and counter-revolutionist, Raphael Abramovich, Nathan Chavin and the Matthew Woll so-called Committee for Human Rights—are beneficiaries of these funds.

These funds are also used to finance the organism in the office of the International under the leadership of Jay Lovestone, who specializes in the work of intrigues in the labor movement

abroad and disruption and red-baiting in the progressive trade unions at home.

I am afraid the progressive workers have adopted too fatalistic attitude toward these dangerously disruptive and undemocratic practices of the leadership. They have too readily submitted to the unjust distribution of the vacation fund under the flimsy excuse that they would get the money some time in the future. Many workers who know that the relief funds are not used for the purposes for which they were intended often adopt the attitude, "What can we do about it?" Such passivity plays into the hands of the reactionaries who aim to rob the workers of benefits achieved in struggle.

Now that the reports have been publicized, it is necessary for the progressive workers to take the lead in raising the demand for the distribution of the vacation fund to the workers to whom it properly belongs, and to demand that the relief fund be used to help the people in need and not for the purposes inimical to the interests of the labor movement and to the unity of the United Nations.