

Did the Cloakmakers Win?

By JOSEPH ZACK.

PEOPLE nowadays have short memories, and our friends of the Forward attempt to take advantage of this fact. Whether the cloakmakers won or not cannot be determined by enumerating the gains embodied in the new agreement, but must be considered in line with the circumstances and the alignment of forces that preceded this great struggle.

We must refresh our memories as to what preceded this strike. It is but two years that our "pure and simple" trade unionist (more simple than pure), Morris Sigman, as president of the international, conceived of a relatively radical program, known as the "ten commandments." No one except a fool could seriously think that these demands could be won without a bitter struggle. Instead of mobilizing all the forces for this struggle, Sigman mobilized to expel and crush his opponents inside the union, the result of which was one of the bitterest civil wars we ever had in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

THE "ten commandments" were mere camouflage to make the members believe that the international does respond to their needs and does weaken the resistance against the expulsion policy. Since the expelling, however, did not make sufficient headway, Sigman brought in the governor of the state of New York and referred the ten commandments to a commission appointed by him so as to create the illusion that something was being done to get these demands. Meanwhile the fight against the lefts came to a head and the result was a defeat for Sigman. As a result of this policy the cloakmakers lost two years and entered the struggle for these demands under left wing leadership at a time when the union treasury was at its lowest ebb.

THE governor's commission brought in recommendations that are well in line with the present policy of the American Federation of Labor, namely, to get concessions in wages from the employers but to give the employers a free hand on the matter of getting the maximum of production out of the workers, which can

Since the following article was written, the reactionary elements in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union under the nominal leadership of Morris Sigman, and the actual leadership of Abraham Cahan of the Jewish Daily Forward, Morris Hillquit, leader of the socialist party, and Abraham Beckerman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, have come out openly in an attempt to split the union, with the aid of policemen and gangsters, but have failed to wrest control from the left wing. In the middle of a strike this treacherous crew called a mass meeting of the right wingers and gangsters and declared themselves against the strike, denouncing the leaders of the New York Joint Board for having called it. Naturally, the Sigman-Forward-Hillquit gang have the support of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy, the governor of New York, Tammany Hall, the capitalist press—particularly the New York Times—and the manufacturers. The battle is now on. Don't miss THE DAILY WORKER'S daily story on the progress of the struggle.—EDITOR.

only be done by giving the employers the right of discharge. Those parts of the commissions' recommendations that were favorable to the workers, the most important of which was the limitation of contractors, was not accepted by the jobbers; and even the recommendation was so weak that it was doubtful as to what was really meant by it. The commission ignored the question of reduction of hours and gave a very slight wage increase. Despite this unfavorable decision of this commission, which was looked upon as a high arbitration board, the right wing continued to cling to its old policy and accepted this unfavorable recommendation.

The employers, of course, were not so foolish as not to understand this stand of the leadership of the international and to stubbornly insist on the right of discharge thus gained and endorsed by the right wing. Despite this endorsement by the right wing leaders of discharge rights, the new leadership rejected the governor's commission recommendations and called a strike.

THEREUPON the right wing brought in the governor once more as a strikebreaking force, which resulted in the insistence of Governor Smith on what amounted to compulsory arbitration. This move was again endorsed by the right wing. Still the new leadership, with all this pressure from the inside as well as from the most powerful state government in

the United States, refused to give in to what would have amounted to a surrender of the workers' demands to a commission this time functioning openly as an arbitration board. The next move against the union was to compel it to surrender by the use of the full force of the state, which resulted in the issuance of the most sweeping injunction ever issued in the history of organized labor in the needle industry, and again the right wing demonstrated that it was in agreement with this last strikebreaking move of the governor by the way it sabotaged the mobilization of forces to break down this injunction. It is plain that during the entire strike the right wing continued to use the state government as a means of breaking the strike and it used this method against the left wing in a more vicious form than during the expulsion campaign. Because during the strike the issue was decided whether the left wing can be defeated and discredited before the workers or not. The right wing sought to prove that the militant policy of struggle for the workers' demands must be abandoned and the policy of co-operation with the employers (class collaboration), together with all the corruption and deception of the masses, which is the inevitable accompaniment of such a policy, must be continued as a policy of the labor movement.

DURING the entire duration of the strike the right wing accompanied

their use of the governor as a strikebreaker with the sharpest pressure they could bring upon the union with out openly exposing themselves.

Not only did they discourage any militant action of the union to combat the strike-breaking methods of the governor, but it was quite apparent that scabbery was greatly encouraged by them outside of New York, as well as in New York itself, a role in which Ninfo and Dubinsky played no small part. It was also quite evident that the manufacturers were well informed about the union's plans, which made it possible for them to hold out against the union's demands and gave them a tremendous advantage in the settlement negotiations and thus made the strike such a prolonged struggle. Every happening in the settlement committee was known to the leaders of the Industrial Council and it was apparent that the propaganda they put forth in paid advertisements, etc., was inspired from sources close to the innermost circle of the union. All this was accompanied by a deliberate sabotage of relief sources, in all of which they had the full support and co-operation of the entire A. F. of L. bureaucracy.

The distinguishing feature of the right wing's strike-breaking policy in this strike, which differentiates it from the policy pursued by their colleagues in the furriers is that outwardly, once the strike was declared, they camouflaged their dangerous strike-breaking policy with an attitude of militantly speaking for the worker demands, which to a considerable extent deluded the workers and made their treachery so much more dangerous for the union. Even the left wing was, at the beginning, taken in by this appearance of a real united front to win the strike. Now that the left wing is exposing their strike-breaking policy in detail they are coming out in the open in the midst of the strike, while over 10,000 workers are still fighting the jobbers.

UNDER these circumstances we can say that the establishment of the 40-hour week, the substantial increase in wages above the governor's commission recommendations, the limitation of discharge rights, the recognition of the examiners and a number

of other points places the settlement as one far above the governor's commission recommendations. The fact that the cloakmakers were able to force such a settlement despite the great support, covert and open, the manufacturers received from the state government and the right wing, is indeed as great a victory as could have been achieved. It is true that the cloakmakers suffered a partial defeat on the point of 10 per cent reorganization, but they fought against it and under the left wing leadership will yet defeat the manufacturers on this point if, in the course of the next three years, the right wing is eliminated as a dominant factor in the needle industry and the various needle trades internationals are consolidated thru amalgamation into a powerful industrial union covering the entire industry. The partial defeat on the reorganization must be placed squarely on the right wing, which, thru the governor's commission, brought it into the industry and then connived with all the enemies of the union to impose not only this point upon the cloakmakers, but intended to force a settlement below the governor's commission recommendations upon the strikers. In this, no matter what the right wing may say, they were definitely defeated. The strike settlement thus marks a defeat for the right wing. It eliminates the governor's commission as a factor and marks the beginning of the definite elimination of the right wing control of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

(Special to The Daily Worker)
WASHINGTON, Dec. 19.—Notice has been served upon republican leaders in the house by Representative Fish of New York and others that there will be strong opposition to the alien property bill which is to be taken up Thursday.

Representative Green of Iowa, chairman of the ways and means committee, asked for an early consideration of the bill, which attempts to settle the long-standing question of the return of German national's property seized during the war and payment of claims of American nationals against the German government.

The opposition will demand no German property be returned until all American claims are paid in full.

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