

Matthew Woll in the Role of Stool Pigeon

By JOSEPH ZACK

ABOUT three weeks ago Matthew Woll, the leader of the Civic Federation, (an outfit of big open shoppers) and First Vice-President of the A. F. of L., in charge of the anti left wing crusade centering at present in the needle trades, sent out a letter in the name of the A. F. of L. to all affiliated local unions demanding that they furnish pickets to protect the scabs against the mass picket lines of the striking furriers who have been outlawed by the A. F. of L. bureaucracy. The communication was the sensation of the year in the New York labor movement.

It meant that union men were to fight union men in the open streets. The furriers and their friends were preparing for the event. Everyone asked himself the question, is it

possible that workers would obey such an order and let themselves be used against their best interests by this tool of the open shop bosses operating within the labor movement in the interests of Wall Street?

Proposed Fratricidal War

Matthew Woll's idea was to smash the mass picket line of the furriers with a mass picket line of conservative union men that he thus intended to mobilize. And since he had the police of his side, his picket line assisted by the police and gangsters would be able to smash the fighting furriers right in the streets in approved Mussolini style and those that would resist would be arrested on charges of felonious assault and sent to jail.

The leaders of the bosses had a meeting previous to that and de-

cided that some of the leaders must be done away with. The stage was all set for the head smashing, bone breaking, clubbing and stabbing party which Matthew Woll was preparing against the striking furriers. This strike breaking expedition with a union label was to be something unparalleled in the history of the labor movement. The capitalist press was featuring it big. Here was a chance for the bosses, big and small, to watch how union men will slaughter each other in open daylight at the behest of the bosses' agent, Matthew Woll. Surely they would have been glad to pay big money to witness it from a grand stand.

The leaves of absence and weekend permits of the police were canceled. They were drilling for the

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New York Labor Ignores Woll

The furriers and their friends were not asleep. They appealed to the feeling that every union-man has against provocation and stool pigeoning of the Matthew Woll style. No union man likes to see himself as an assistant to the police fighting with these uniformed slugs against-union men striking to uphold their hard won conditions.

Tuesday came. The fur district was clustered up with police. The murderous looking gangster forces of the Industrial Squad were seen rushing back and forth, mounted police clattered down the streets and motor-cycle police paraded with machine guns in readiness. The stage was all set for a repetition of Pasale police terrorism. But this time the attack against the strikers was to be led by the A. F. of L. There was an ominous atmosphere of expectancy. Will the A. F. of L. workers obey the Judas order of Matthew Woll? If they do, the enemies of the labor movement had made all the military preparations for the purpose of doing the job. BUT THE A. F. of L. PICKETS DID NOT APPEAR! Evidently the A. F. of L. members in the most conservative local unions understood—they would not let themselves be used against the fur workers by the Judas, Matthew Woll.

The police had to do the job all alone. Evidently Matthew Woll, McGrady, and Frayne had misgivings that no rank and file workers will respond to their strike breaking order. The police therefore had instructions how to act in such an event. They rode into the pickets, swinging their clubs, they herded the workers en masse into the Black Marias (patrol-wagons). Mass arrests, 300 at a time.

Mass Arrests to Suppress Mass Picketing

So this was the scheme. Suppression of mass picketing by mass arrests and terrorization of the pickets by brutalities. Day by day hundreds of arrests, not on the charge of picketing, but on the charge of obstructing traffic, congesting the sidewalks, etc.; the police would permit only twelve pickets to a block. Thugs would rush up in taxicabs, and under the very noses of the police would attack the strikers with knives or iron bars and then rush back to their cabs. It was in one of these attacks that Aaron Gross, one of the ablest leaders of the furriers, was blackjacked and

had his jugular vein cut open. Gross was hovering between life and death for several days.

In the police stations those that dared to offer resistance to any of the brutalities would be given a terrible beating. Some had to be sent to hospitals as a result of these beatings. The brutality towards women pickets reminds one of the anti-German stories during the war. The foul language and treatment used towards these working girls on the picket line, particularly by the police gangsters, can not be put in print. Day in and day out mass picketing, mass arrests, jail sentences, fines, brutalities under the direction of the A. F. of L. committee backed up by the Clivio Federation, the bosses in the needle industry, the police department, judges, etc.

Central Trades and Labor Council Repudiates Woll

The indignation of the rank and file against Matthew Woll must have been running high indeed by this time even in the most conservative locals. Here was Matthew Woll, A. F. of L. leader, openly bragging about his police and stool pigeon methods for weeks, dragging the reputation of the labor movement down in the gutter, working hand in hand with the police, courts, the capitalist press and all the enemies of labor, while 200,000 miners

are fighting a lock-out, and 10,000 plumbers locked out right in New York. For the last two years there was a veritable reign of injunctions against labor in the New York district, prohibiting strikes, picketing and organizing. The bakers, painters, plumbers, paper box workers, etc., all had their share of police oppression and judicial tyranny. And here was Matthew Woll openly working on the side of all the enemies of labor. It was more than even the most conservative workers could tolerate. This indignation of the rank and file is now forcing even a part of the labor officialdom to come out against Matthew Woll's methods.

Thus about two weeks ago a heated attack on Woll broke loose in the New York Central Trades and Labor Council. President Ryan himself, in his own as well as in the name of Sullivan, head of the New York State Federation of Labor, denounced Matthew Woll's methods and called upon the local unions not to support Woll. Within a few days after this came similar action by the California State Federation and by the Philadelphia central body. Matthew Woll's scandalous conduct as a labor leader has attracted nation-wide attention and produced nation-wide resentment.

This sentiment must be utilized by the progressives and left wingers to defeat Matthew Woll's campaign

Rail Conductors' Chief Denounces Arbitration

Labor, the weekly organ of the railroad unions, publishes the following statement of the president of the Order of Railway Conductors, L. E. Sheppard:

"It is impossible for me to comprehend how two men of supposedly sound minds, meaning the two 'neutral' arbitrators, could father such an award as they have handed down for the conductors and trainmen in the Western territory.

"Were I to express any further opinion in this matter it would not look well in print.

"The decision convinces me that 'arbitrators' who know nothing of railroad employment cannot be expected to give the workers anything like a fair break.

"I was opposed to submitting wage disputes to arbitration in the first instance, and am more emphatically of that mind now."

against the left wing. Under the direction of Woll, the struggle of the reactionaries against the left wing has become outright scabbery and stool-pigeoning, and is endangering the right of all workers to strike and picket. "Wollism" must be driven out of the labor movement.



Arrested Fur Pickets

Over a thousand fur workers were arrested and hundreds sentenced to jail, thanks to the efforts of Matthew Woll.