

# THE FIGHTING WORKER

Vol. 6, No. 19, whole No. 85

Wednesday, Dec. 10, 1941

Labor Donated

Price: 1 Cent

## Lessons of the Coal Strike

The strike of the 53,000 miners in the captive coal mines has cracked the administration hopes for quietly hogtie-ing labor into the "national unity" set-up. Even the outright last minute capitulation of John L. Lewis came a little too late for a good cover up.

It is impossible to understand this strike unless it is viewed as part of the labor situation as a whole.

### LIVING CONDITIONS GOING DOWN

The rapid rise in prices, rents and taxes, all brought on by the huge war preparations, is far more than off-setting the small

wage increases won by the workers. The cost of living is climbing higher and higher. There is more money in circulation, but **real** wages (what the worker can buy with his wages) is **decreasing**. At the same time the war industries bosses are cleaning up millions. The desperate need to make ends meet has driven the working class into the series of strike movements in the last period.

True, the labor officialdom has exerted itself manfully to clamp down the lid with the nails of "national unity", propaganda about the "all important defense (war) effort", "no strike agreements",

and all manner of mediation schemes.

To no avail. The nails would not hold. Strike after strike has broken out. Twice the army has been called in to break key strikes. The navy has done the same in the Kearny, N. J. shipyard strike. Strikes and strikes threats come from all sides: airplane, ships, coal, communications, railroads, truckers... Almost before one is settled, smashed or sold out, another arises to give the ruling class and its labor lieutenants the jitters.

The coal strike occurred on this background of unrest. The pro-steel decision of the Mediation Board forced the issue. It not only exposed the Board to the rank and file workers. It also was a telling blow against Lewis. But his bureaucratic control of the miners, his hold on the CIO, and his prestige would have suffered even more except for the demonstration strike he organized.

### SELLING OUT

Lewis is one of the most astute and fore-sighted labor fakery America has produced. He gave verbal expression to the immediate interests of the miners, while successfully channelizing and checking their militancy. In what immediately became an open struggle with the capitalist government, he made no open attempt to extend the strike, to involve the steel workers, to broaden this issue to include economic demands as well as the closed shop and his precious check-off. He was on the defensive from the start. He made no attempt to get the CIO convention to go beyond its empty gesture of a resolution endorsing the strike.

(Not that the machine politicians who ran the CIO convention  
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## Waller Sentenced to Burn Dec. 12

Richmond, Va. — Following swift upon the heels of the recent decision of the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia, the Circuit Court of Pittsylvania County has again sentenced Odell Waller to die in the electric chair on December 12.

Thomas H. Stone, senior counsel, has already petitioned the Governor of Virginia for stay so that a petition for writ of habeas corpus may be filed with the Virginia Supreme Court. It will be remembered that this court, as told in a previous issue of the FW, had held that Waller's constitutional rights had not been violated because it had not been shown that there was actual exclusion of non-poll-tax payers from the juries which indicted and tried him.

Waller's counsel is prepared to show that, as a matter of actual fact, every one of the men on the jury panel were poll tax payers, and that only an insignificant

fraction had been in arrears at any time. If the Virginia Supreme Court refuses the writ, then the case will be taken to the Supreme Court of the U.S.A.

### ORGANIZE COMMITTEES

But these legal actions, although necessary, are not decisive. Already Odell Waller has been saved from the electric chair for over a year despite the hostility of the courts, the contemptible treachery of Virginus Dabney and his ilk, and the legalistic attitude of the Workers Defense League and the NAACP.

What has saved him? Only mass pressure of the working class elements centered around the Waller Defense Committee. If Waller is to be saved this pressure must be increased, must be organized and solidified to such an extent that the landlord courts will be compelled to tear up their own decisions and restore to liberty Odell Waller.

# Trotskyites Wilt Under Fire

How revolutionists should **not** testify in capitalist courts was shown by the speech of Albert Goldman in the Minnesota sedition trial against the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party and members of truckers' union 544 CIO. Goldman spoke both as lawyer for the defense and as leading representative of his party. His speech is published **without criticism** in his party's official organ, the *Militant*, Nov. 8, 1941.

The speech constitutes political capitulation under pressure. On almost every key point the Trotskyites, through Goldman, presented an opportunist, adulterated and non-Marxist position.

It is obvious that the revolutionist on trial must take care to prevent his views from being twisted and misrepresented into the crude and typical provocateur statements about bomb throwing and inciting to riots, etc., that the prosecution needs to put through its frame-up. Revolutionists, however, use the court as a forum for their political position, not permitting either a provocateur distortion or a watering down of them.

## FORCE AND VIOLENCE

In answer to the state's charge of advocating force and violence Goldman stated: "**The evidence will show that at a certain moment in history this class struggle will become more and more serious and might lead to a violent war... We prefer a peaceful transition, but we predict that the minority will not permit the majority its right to establish socialism... The defendants never advocated, never incited to violence, but simply predicted the violence of the reactionary minority...**" (our emphasis).

This is a false way of posing the

question. It is not a matter of advocating or inciting to violence as such, nor is it a matter of merely making predictions, as Goldman puts it. Revolutionists advocate and participate in the task of educating and helping the working class to be conscious, organized and prepared for the violence which scientific analysis shows the reactionary minority will use against the majority. When the capitalist system breaks down and the exploiting minority is incapable of satisfying the most elementary needs of the masses of

## PROBLEMS OF LIFE

One of the miracles of our times is the way revolutionary publications continue to appear despite seemingly impossible odds, financial and otherwise.

We ourselves, when we look back over a few months, are almost at a loss to explain how the *Fighting Worker* kept on coming out each week. The answer lies in the support of our friends and members and sympathizers. We are proud of this support, and we know our comrades are even prouder of the revolutionary message which their support enabled the *Fighting Worker* to present.

That is why we do not hesitate to call for greater support.

The pressure of the war and the reaction is felt in many ways. Inflation and priorities have jumped prices for materials and make it difficult to get repair parts for the press. And in addition, the League convention, necessary and helpful to the organization as it was, drained our financial resources. As a result we have missed three issues of the paper.

We need the help of our readers and friends. Marxist views are at a premium today. Send in what you can to keep the weekly *Fighting Worker* going. The bosses are increasing their war propaganda against the working class. Answer it by helping to build the *Fighting Worker*.

the population, the ruling class will use armed terror to maintain its rule; the proletariat will be compelled to defend itself against this terror.

## WAR QUESTION

The Trotskyites, like Norman Thomas and various others, oppose the "imperialist war". But what is the Trotskyite policy on fighting this imperialist war?

Goldman answers: "**The Socialist Workers Party opposes sabotage... The claim that we prefer the enemy, the imperialistic enemy of the United States to defeat our government is absolutely false... We have never advocated the idea of insubordination in the army...**"

What a humiliating repudiation of Marxian principles! Marxists oppose **individual** sabotage unrelated to the class struggle, but advocate working class action to disrupt the slaughter for profit and cripple the exploiters' war machine. They expose the frightful social sabotage of imperialism and its wars. The ruling class are the real saboteurs of the needs and interests of the people and society.

Nor does any revolutionist deny his views on the character and role of the imperialist army. Marxists call for the defense of the worker-soldiers' interests, for the establishment of worker-soldier councils, the election of new officers from the ranks of the soldiers, for the ending of the imperialist bloodbath, for the setting up of a Workers Government and a Workers Army.

Revolutionists are not for the victory of either their own ruling class or its enemy in the imperialist war. Revolutionists support the interests of the working class and the masses of the people. The main enemy of the working class is at home — its own exploiters. They point out that in sheer self-defense against the mass murder, the working class will be driven into struggle against the imperialists and their war, will be forced into struggle to overthrow the rul-

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(Affiliated to the Provisional  
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For a New Communist (4th  
International)

Subscription \$1.00 per year

Published weekly by

DEMOS PRESS

Office

708 N. Clark St.

Chicago, Ill.

## League Convention

Meeting in the midst of the Second Imperialist War, the 5th Convention of the Revolutionary Workers League, U. S., which took place at the end of November, answered the demand of American Capitalism for the liquidation of the class struggle, by expressing renewed determination to carry on the struggle for the international workers' revolution.

Agenda points were: the imperialist war and the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union; the U.S. internal question; and organization. After thorough discussion, all reports were adopted. Positions taken were based on material already appearing in the Fighting Worker and the International News, and other documents which will shortly be presented.

The convention marked 6 years of existence of the RWL as an independent organization, since its break with liquidationist Trotskyism. Occurring in a period of the most unprecedented confusion and disorientation in the world labor movement, the reaffirmation of the basic principles of Marxism by the 5th Convention, despite growing obstacles, is a heartening sign for the future of the revolutionary movement.

## MARXIAN STUDY CLASSES

Trade Union Tactics and  
Strategy

Instructor — Sid Okun

Theoretical System of Marxism

Instructor to be announced

Dialectical Materialism

Instructor — Hugo Oehler

# How Not To Testify

(Continued from page 2)

ing class and establish its own system of society. The unbearable conditions of life brought on by the war will force the working class to continue on this course even if it means the military defeat of its own ruling class by the enemy exploiters.

As Lenin pointed out, to take power during the robbers' war and to put an end to the slaughter, the masses must turn the imperialist war into war against the imperialists. To do this the revolutionary class, caught in the web of a reactionary war, cannot help but wish and work for, through working class action, the weakening by military defeat of its own exploiting class, even if this means the temporary "victory" of the "enemy". The purpose is not to help one robber gang against another, but to assist the development of the international workers' revolution against all the exploiters.

### "SUBMIT TO THE GOVERNMENT"

Until we are a majority, says Goldman, "we shall submit and

### have you read

- Trade Unionism Today
- Shall Workers Support a Labor Party?
- History of the American Labor Movement
- Revolutionary Defeatism and Centrism
- Criticism of the Trotskyist Transition Program
- American Imperialism: the Main Driving Force for War
- The Nazi Invasion of the Soviet Union
- Dialectical Materialism and Sidney Hook
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we have nothing else to do but submit to the government." Marxists reject the idea of giving up the class struggle during imperialist war; and point out that the working class will be forced by its own conditions to continue its struggle for the right to live. The fight against exploitation, unemployment, starvation and mass murder goes on, whether the bosses decree the class struggle legal or illegal. The 21 Points of admission to the Communist International under Lenin, calling for the building of an illegal structure by the Marxist vanguard in all countries, gives the answer to this capitulationist Trotskyist position.

### MARX, LENIN AND TROTSKY

In opposing the introduction into the trial of the basic works of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, Goldman stated that the Trotskyites agree with all their fundamental theories, but not all their theories. With what "theories" of Marx and Lenin do the Trotskyites not agree? Are the differences tactical or principled? Neither Goldman nor the Militant in printing the speech, make any reply.

The whole of Goldman's statement is a logical outcome of the centrist line of Trotskyism. The pressure of the trial in the midst of the war is forcing it to the right, to reformism in action and to social patriotism. The slogan for "turning the imperialist war into a war against fascism", which plays into the hands of the pro-capitalist "anti-fascists"; the critical support to a Labor Party, a third capitalist party; the left support to John L. Lewis in the trade unions; the pledge to "submit"; the rejection of "insubordination and sabotage", etc, etc, are but the first steps in this process.

Marxists must expose the renegacy of the Trotskyites under fire, and draw a clear sharp line between revolutionary principles and Trotskyite centrism, while at the same time intensifying the fight for the freedom of the Trotskyites from the boss class prosecution and frame-up.

# Gov't Seeks to Hogtie Labor

## For Rank and File Control of the Trade Unions

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tion would have given real support and backing. They, as much as Lewis, saw no reason for jeopardizing their comfortable "jobs". A real fight involved the readiness to make personal sacrifices, possibly even jail sentences, in a showdown. They have become "labor leaders" precisely to avoid making sacrifices. Furthermore, they are supporting the war and armaments program. They recognized, along with the capitalist class, that to put this program over the **working class** will unfortunately have to sacrifice).

### ROLE OF MEDIATION BOARD

The Mediation Board decision was made with this same thought in mind: in the present stage of war preparations, the capitalist class comes first, the armaments program second, and the working class last. The needs of the working class, and the needs of the bosses' war program, are in exact contradiction to each other. The Mediation Board had to choose. As far back as March 10, writing in the CIO News, even Phil Murray showed he knew what the role of the Mediation Board would be:

Such a board, said Murray, "will necessarily find its attention directed against labor in order to maintain the status quo as much as possible," and will seek to prevent, "wage increases or improvements of working conditions of labor." He foresaw that the board would "bring terrific pressure to bear on labor to agree to arbitration in practically all situations," and would inevitably pave the way for compulsory arbitration and outlawing strikes.

But Lewis, Murray and their henchmen are 100% for capitalism, for the profit system which operates so admirably to their own profit. They believe and practice class collaboration. So they went along with the Board.

The CIO leaders are justified in branding as treachery the act of

the 2 AFL leaders who voted for the Board's pro-steel decision. But no less traitors are Murray and Kennedy and the other CIO bureaucrats. By accepting positions on the Board and building it up in the eyes of the workers, they paved the road for the present situation. Nor does their resignation from the Board indicate a change of heart. They openly endorse the Mediation principle, and already are angling for positions on the new Labor Mediation Board set up.

If this support to the Mediation Board had merely boomeranged against the labor fakery, the working class could easily put up with such a poetic justice. The crime is that the labor fakery are so treacherously mis-educating the working class about the true role of the boss state and its mediation boards; that the labor leaders are **helping** Big Business and its office boys in the government to gain control of the labor movement under government supervision.

### CRACK DOWN LABOR POLICY

Lewis' capitulation temporarily saved Roosevelt's labor policy. This policy is essentially a transitional one, calculated on the existing situation. It seeks to win labor into the national unity set-up, as far as possible, before resorting to a crack-down policy. At the same time, when the issue is forced as in the North American Aviation strike, the administration has not hesitated at open strike breaking through the army. But many sections of big business are demanding a forceful crack down policy.

The coal strike provided an opening for the right wing forces to introduce a series of bills indicating the line of march. These bills range from authorizing plant seizures to break "defense" strikes,

to outlawing jurisdictional and sympathy strikes, providing a 30 day "cooling off" period, freezing the open shop, and outright outlawing of strikes in "defense" industries as sabotage punishable by fines of \$10,000 and 10 years imprisonment.

Even though the strike was called off, the right wing forces have been greatly strengthened, and it is only a matter of time until the Administration "clarifies" its labor policy in this direction.

### TASKS OF PROGRESSIVES

The coal strike, even though abortive, throws light on many questions of great importance in the coming months. Like the airplane and shipyard strikes before it, only more so, does it establish the tendency for strike struggles, originating out of purely economic and trade union demands, to be rapidly converted into struggles against the state. Economic strikes are becoming political, even though the working class as a whole does not realize nor understand this development.

The effects of even local strikes react upon vital spheres of national economy. The struggle for workers control of production for use becomes more and more clearly the only real solution to the problems of the working class.

Lewis' sell-out of the miners poses anew the need for shop committees and rank and file control of the unions. Such rank and file control — and the elimination of the check-off — will break the hold of the labor fakery and racketeers. The rank and file can establish its own closed shop and workers defense guard to defend the union and members against company police and thugs.

Progressive elements in the miners and other unions, who understand and spread the lessons of the coal strike, will be greatly advancing the level of the labor movement in preparation for the struggles to come.

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**FOR WORKING CLASS UNITY  
AGAINST NATIONAL UNITY**