

## Miners Rally to Aid Of Progressive Bloc

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must fight to maintain the scale in the organized districts, and to raise the scale of the now unorganized miners by organization. It must demand and secure the check-off in the unorganized fields and bring all miners under a short-term, national agreement with no wage cuts attached to it.

The miner is a militant and stoical individual. He is capable of intense heroism during strikes or other crises—Herrin and the Mingo marchers show his readiness to battle with whatever weapons are necessary, and his dangerous life underground makes him more reckless of personal danger above ground than the average worker.

### Stealing Elections

But this same impassiveness permits machine and gang control by corrupt officials in a greater degree than in any other organization of semi-skilled workers.

Here is an example: Local 1672, Grassy Island, Pa., has about 8,000 dues paying members, in a locality in which 13,000 miners work. In the election this year 158 votes were cast for international president, and the Lewis machine was defeated three to one. Formerly, the machine officials of this local were in the habit of casting the entire 8,000 votes themselves (they just filled in the return sheets according to fancy) and the votes were counted for Lewis.

When the election comes around in a progressive local, the vote is frequently killed by sabotage on the part of some reactionary official. The international, district and sub-district constitutions abound in "red tape" provisions, which if not complied with will void the vote. Votes are never voided if they are for the machine, but the progressives are held to the letter of the law.

### Arbitrary Expulsions

If all else fails, if a progressive is elected to a key position, he can simply be expelled by decree of some higher body. In this election, the hero of the rank and file, Alex Howat, was arbitrarily thrown off the Kansas ballot, and all local workers nominated him for that office, were as arbitrarily denied the privilege of voting in the election, by a telegraphic order from President Lewis, to Lewis' own group, in control of offices in the Kansas district since its "reorganization" by Lewis, after Howat's expulsion without trial several years ago. Howat is allowed to come back in the union and mine coal now, but there his privileges end.

It is in such an atmosphere as this then, among men accustomed to this sort of machine control, that the present revolt is taking place. It is evident that in order to explain a mass uprising under these circumstances, we must look for some very powerful factor, operating so directly on the individual members as to force large numbers of them to the same conclusion.

### Lewis' Destructive Rule

That factor is the collapse of the union itself all along its outlying edges, where unionized territory borders non-union territory; so that 200,000 members have been lost within the last three years. And part of it is the condition that causes the collapse, the shifting of coal production to non-union territory, so that now two thirds of the soft coal mined in America comes from non-union mines which Lewis makes no attempt to organize.

And the result of both these movements is that there was terrible unemployment throughout the union fields, until the British strike and the threat of an American strike next April brought about increased production in American mines late in the Fall.

# The Needle Trades, a Center of Struggle

BY JOSEPH ZACK, Secretary, Needle Trades Section, T. U. E. L.

THE eyes of the labor movement are now focused on the Needle Trades unions. These unions of "foreigners" in the past were looked upon as a sort of intrusion on the bona fide labor movement that had to be tolerated for the sake of a correct official policy. These "Jews", "Dagoes", "Polacks", etc., are now the prized objective of the entire reactionary officialdom of the A. F. of L. How did this come about?

The organized Left Wing, that flexible, well-organized, invincible combination of active militants inside the unions, pushed out the old degenerated bureaucracy, and transformed these organizations into militant organs of struggle against the employers.

### One Year's Results

Within one year after assumption of control by the Left Wing, the 40-hour week was established in collective agreements affecting over 60,000 workers, wage increases were obtained of from 10 to 25 per cent, and the days of buying union officials, of graft and corruption were gone. Instead of sleepy, slow, corrupt unions, a new giant was walking through the factories, not afraid to fight and intent upon strengthening all needle unions by amalgamation.

All the old gang of soft job holders in the A. F. of L. were struck dumb with horror.

The readers of LABOR UNITY probably recall how William Green and H. C. Frayne, the latter the New York representative of the A. F. of L., interfered in the strike of the New York Furriers and attempted to settle it over the heads of the Furriers' strike committee on terms worse than the ones the bosses were ready to grant.

Had they succeeded, they would have "re-organized" the Furriers' union, and by this expelled the Left Wing, but they suffered a severe and decisive defeat, and the Furriers

Another result is that conditions in the union fields are, by co-operation of reactionary officials, allowed to grow worse; the companies arrogantly defy the union, refuse to allow organizers on their property, as at the Hudson Coal Company properties in the anthracite, or refuse "pay for dead work", demand higher loading of cars (with coal that falls off and brings no money to the miner), decline to keep the safety laws, and continually increase the scope of coal cutting and coal loading machines so as to throw men out of work.

Even in solidly organized Illinois, numerous companies have closed down for long periods, and then reopened on the basis of no payment of back wages, or only partial payment, through some stock selling scheme, or fake "guarantee" arrangement. The Dayeraux mine, near Springfield, is a typical case. It reopened recently, with a month's back pay due the workers, which it proposes to liquidate under a scheme which will take it over three years to accomplish.

### The Miners Must Fight

It is this growing arrogance of the mine owner, the constant crumbling of the edges of the unionized territory, the constant relative decrease in production in union fields, and the knowledge that next April a desperate strike will probably be initiated, with odds against the union, and treacherous officials leading it, that makes the miner wild. At last he is beginning to listen to the progressives, who have urged him all along to clean out the corrupt officials and organize the unorganized fields. The miners will demand a fair count of their votes, which, if obtained, will surely show that the progressives were elected.

ors got the 40-hour week and a large increase of wages; in spite of the encouragement the bosses got from the president of the A. F. of L.

### They "Investigate" a Victory

The workers understood the game and Mr. Green could not break that strike, though it was a long strike due to his efforts. After the strike was won, the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. staged an "investigation" of it, with the purpose of reversing the attack on the Furriers' union at an opportune time, which the council may think fitting at any moment.

We thought that from their defeat in the Furriers' union, the A. F. of L. bureaucracy and their friends among the so-called "socialist" leaders, had learned how not to break strikes in the needle trades. But now we see they did not.

### Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

When the New York Cloakmakers' strike started, the right wing leaders gave themselves an honest appearance, although they said they were willing to settle without the 40-hour week, with but a slight increase in wages, and to concede to the bosses the right to discharge 10 per cent of their workers in order to increase the efficiency of production as recommended by a commission appointed by Governor Al Smith at their request. When this proposal of theirs was rejected by the general strike committee, they spoke in the strike halls aggressively for all demands.

Outwardly, the appearance was given as if the union was united and had the support of the A. F. of L. Even, the Left Wing was to some extent fooled by this policy. The reactionaries were given control of several strategic committees and they were well represented in all other committees.

### Secret Betrayal

Soon, however, it was apparent that they were working secretly with the bosses. The employers knew what was going on in the closed circles of the union. They knew the amount of money on hand. They knew the secret minimum terms on which the union committee was ready to settle. Any secret or unofficial approval of important firms to settlement, was immediately divulged to the Employers' association.

The Law Committee and the Out-of-Town Committee in control of the right-wingers, tipped off the scab shops ahead of visits of the Picket Committee. At the investigation of International President Sigman, the governor of the state of New York was gotten to try to compel the union to submit to compulsory arbitration. The right wing managers encouraged their members to scab and right wing unions were tipped off not to support the Relief Committee.

### Masses Break Injunction

When the union did not submit to the compulsory arbitration proposed through the governor, one of the most extensive and drastic injunctions in the history of the industry suddenly appeared to protect scabs, as a result of which thousands of pickets were arrested and haled into court. For the union decided rightly that the injunction should be defied.

Several times the employers were ready to settle, but each time the right wing officials prevented the settlement by telling the employers through their secret connections not to settle. They accommodated the bosses by helping them have work done in union shops outside of New York.

### Victory Despite All

Despite all this, the union under left wing leadership forced the em-

ployers to settle on terms far better than the right wing promised, to settle on at the beginning of the strike. The new agreement includes the 40-hour week; wage increases of from 10 to 20 per cent, and even on the point of the employers' right to 10 per cent discharge, upon which the union had to yield, it obtained important safeguards and restrictions such as a minimum of 32 weeks' wages per year and no discharge for union activity, etc.

The right wing and the capitalist press allied with it, howled that this was a defeat, but the workers understood the game and knew that under the circumstances it was a victory.

The workers approved the settlement almost unanimously. This got the right wing officials mad. It is known that Matthew Wolf, Thomas McMahon, Morris Sigman and John L. Lewis, had a meeting at which it was decided to break up the whole thing. There were 8,000 workers for contractors still on strike. Sigman, the International President, got the Contractors' association to threaten a lockout if the union did not submit to their ultimatum. The union did not submit. The lockout was smashed, and the contractors did the submitting.

### Disruption Becomes Open

Sigman now played his ace. He suspended the strike committee. He suspended the Joint Board and the executives of the left wing locals comprising the majority of the membership of the International. He did this without charges, without trials, and appointed a new strike committee pledged in advance to arbitration, appointed new executive boards, and appointed himself as strike leader.

All this was done on the pretense that the strike was illegal, although he himself and his vice-president were members of the leading strike committees, although the General Executive Board controlled by him had approved of the strike, and the A. F. of L. convention itself, had endorsed the strike.

### A Fascist Program

Sigman counts on the workers' submission because they have been starved for five months of strike. He counts on the 300 gangsters he has mobilized from the underworld. He counts on their protection by the police in gang violence against the Left Wing. He counts on the backing of the whole trade union bureaucracy. He counts upon the government, federal and state, to imprison and deport left wingers. He counts upon support of the open-shop employers, who, like himself, raise the false issue of "Communism" and "reds" against any militant unionism.

By these measures, and by his turning from the workers to call upon the community at large to crush class struggle, Sigman has shown himself blood-brother to the leaders of fascism.

### The Membership Stands Firm

The conferees Sigman called of the self-styled "Committee for the Preservation of the Trade Unions" is but a mask for disruption and splitting of the unions which the workers will not permit him to rule and betray. Moreover, Sigman and other right wing needle union leaders, intend to prevent amalgamation, these unions' first necessity.

That the workers will not permit either disruption or betrayal was shown on December 18, when 18,000 of the membership poured into Madison Square Garden, unanimously adopted a resolution condemning Sigman and his strike-breaking, demanded he resign, declared they would not be terrorized, but would support their legally elected left wing officials and would eliminate fascist elements and repel all attacks on their union.