

-2-

There were already 100,000 coal miners out on strike when Lewis felt the pressure and called for a general strike. The 100,000 quickly became 400,000. But the 100,000 were out before Lewis called the strike.

But the miners weren't prepared for such a long strike economically no one is; the miners are getting hungry. Credit was cut off and then restored. In our area it is \$1 for single men and \$2 for married men. But that is for those who buy at the company stores; there are many who don't and these have no credit at all. Yet they are out in the cold, starving, and there is no state relief in W. Va. We thought it was time to start a relief committee and to prepare also for when there is no credit at the company store--that's the last weapon they have, and when that happens there would be chaos. This Gov't. publicity about their relief is the bunk. There is a pack of potatoes every two weeks and some dried beans; actually they have given nothing of all the other things they wrote about. This relief idea--first it started at a caucus of some individuals who were instrumental in causing the "rebellion". At this meeting we talked about the possibilities of a relief program.

Later we called a mass meeting of the officers of these locals. They felt it would be a wonderful ~~xxxxxx~~ thing. I found myself chairman of this relief committee. The district approved. The activity thus far has been sending out correspondence to labor weekly in the US--there are 145,--asking them to call union meetings and send relief to this area. This particular move was sanctioned by the District, but we were told to "be sure and steer clear of red locals". Their hands are tied and they can't legally go out and solicit help. The work must be done by rank and file miners and on an individual basis. But the District approved. Of course everything is now done on an individual basis. The locals no longer vote to stay out on strike. But there is such militancy that each individual miner does stay out. And we use a little persuasion in picket lines.

Then this committee decided to send out two to contact other unions. We contacted Freddie in Pittsburgh who contacted Sammie in Youngstown and when the two miners got there they got a good reception. They called me and said they had \$801. and then they are going to Akron and Detroit. One is working with Zupan in Detroit and I was called and told 2 locals there sayd they'd send \$1,000 a month to this area until we go back to work and for the first month after we got back.

Frank will deal with red baiting. ~~xxxxxx~~

Frank : With this activity we have had some red baiting. When we started this committee the local newspaper columnist who has a labor column and his own committee, the Democratic Labor Committee, was called up and told about it. Immediately he became suspicious and wrote a column saying something to the effect that the "miners must be very careful where they get help". He did not mention "Red" but people in the know would know. He continued to speak of "Commies" and "UE". Following this the Republican paper (Morgantown Post) congratulated the democratic labor columnist. Then he continued to write about "Trotskyists" and their activities. (A year or so ago the FBI had ~~xx~~ visited some miner contacts and told them all about Trotskyites on the campus.)

1486

Andy: After we established this committee we had to have some place we could use for a headquarters. We went to Grantown and spoke to Joe's brother; first got the o.k. but then were told it would be better some place else. We went to the "Shack" in Pursglove and there spoke to Rev. Smith who refused to give us his church for this purpose and said he would have nothing to do with us because we represented "sinister forces"; he knew all about it he said from the FBI. And no amount of talk about this being a relief committee, not political, would have him yield. We had to secure another place.

Rodi: As to the red-baiting on the campus. I went to the office to get my credits and when the dean asked me what I'd do I said what we all did; teach history. He said he could not give me a recommendation for that because of my political affiliation. First I was taken back, but I returned the next day more prepared, and told him he could not do that, that he was infringing on my academic freedom. He backed down a bit, but still no recommendation.

Hedi: We got credit for all the "revolt" and there was some red-baiting and there was some talk about where the finances for such a great picket line comes from. We have a meeting with the rest of the local officers for Monday. The picket line is financed by the Dist; and they get the fellows out of jail. 25,000 men are involved in the Fairmont-Morgantown District. We are in contact with Grantown and all the towns between, including Everettville--15 locals in all. Discussed it all with the vice-president of the district as the Dist. president is sick. We would like to collect a total of \$75,000--we figure we need that as about 10% of the miners out are in need of relief. This would also our prestige and not even the "Dem. Labor Committee" and certainly not the miners would any longer question us. That is the real problem there now--the relief. We now have enough people with a good reputation so to speak behind us so that so much emphasis cannot be placed on us. Another thing we must discuss is what to do tomorrow in Pittsburgh when the other committee members will come as they did to Youngstown.

Frank: Another thing that should be reported is the branch activity and the letters to and from New York. The first letter we got urged us to be cautious. Then came a second letter, before they got our letter showing we had secured the District support for the relief committee, in which they said "We told you to be cautious and now..." But that was before they knew we got this support. I sent them the clippings and told them of the support.

Report on Youngstown by Sam: The general attitude of the steel workers is more than sympathetic--they actually want to do something for the miners, much more than for the other mine strikes. Firstly, there are lessons to be learned and secondly they learned from their own strike--the same people own the coal mines. Sam then explained how that even showed itself when they voted money to be sent, it was with the provision to be sent to the captive mines, his was for the Frick mine, at Bell, Pa.

-4-

Sam (in discussing his trip to the Brownsville area where he brought the \$300 his union voted for the miners struggle) The discussion we had with the people there showed there was no rebellion against the Lewis machine. There was solid unity in this case between the machine and the miners themselves. The morale was very high--you had to be a steel worker to appreciate this insistence to stay out on strike.

We then raised the issue of the miners at the CIO Council meeting ~~withxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ that represents the whole section-- We had quite a discussion and passed a resolution, condemning the Truman strike-breaking activity, and asking for donations for miners relief. That was passed unanimously. The Executive Board recoiled from this. But after that came the letter from Murray about the half a million donation to the miners. The large locals immediately started sending money. But there is a clause which says it must be sent through CIO.

When F & K from W. Va. visited and they spoke of the money they gave to build the CIO and that the miners never have asked steel workers for money--the director said any money we can get voluntarily o.k. We sent the comrades on to Akron and Detroit--I spoke to Landauer and he will be ready for them. In Detroit we told them first to go direct to Reuther--nothing can be lost and you can go to the locals after that.

Then there is the problem of the machine and the Murray-Lewis fight cannot be forgotten. We might take advantage of that. Sam then continued in the manner in which he had an off-the-record discussion with the director himself and suggested that a Truck of Food marked from the steel workers to the miners be sent and that that would mean much more than just a check. We got more than we expected. He agreed to the idea of a food caravan--Monday we will see whether it all goes through.

Report by El on Pittsburgh. El began with the atmosphere created by Cystic's "revelations" and how cautiously we therefore moved with extras we ordered of the special mine issue for distribution among steel workers, but that in actuality it had gone off very successfully. She then reported on the distribution of the 1,000 copies in the mining area and the excellent reception we had gotten both among the miners and the lower local leaders who all had been friendly to us, and reported that the revolt was no revolt against Lewis, but that the miners think that what they were doing Lewis wanted them to do, and they were backing up that way. There were supplementary reports to the same effect by John and Freddie. The question of how to get go about getting relief for miners in P'gh. was left for later.

Discussion

Harry: I think this meeting of 3 branches where we get such detailed reports is a very good idea. We have to clear up the question of the clash between district and the locals, if any. From the newspaper reports we get the idea that it was only a "dummy" revolt ordered by Lewis.

If there was a genuine class it means a whole lot for the general situation in the union and the leadership. If there wasn't the dangers are lessened and the possibilities of work are increased. If there was a genuine clash and we have a hostile machine, we have a different situation. That is why I am interested in even greater details and I would like to hear a little more from Morgantown on this point.

"Red" then explained the situation in W. Va. where UMW members had asked the District for protection against pickets coming in from Pa. and that the District had said they could do nothing; it was out of their hand. The meeting voted to send a telegram to Lewis; the reply from Lewis said he was giving it consideration and that after that telegram Lewis took the step for the general strike.

Frank: It has not been a rebellion in the sense of an open, clear and organized rebellion against Lewis and his machine. I think it was a rebellion in this sense only--and after looking back upon the history of the entire year--there was a difference between the kind of policy Lewis was following and the kind the men were following. There was the situation between the miners working only 1 or 2 days in the small mines and the miners didn't wish to strike only the Consolidated mines. It was a rebellion in the sense that the men wanted to engage in a strike against all coal operators for a contract. Then when the International also came out for the general strike, there was no rebellion.

Red: There is another thing. It's hard to make a generalization but always during a strike the miners are learning that other unions have strike funds, and there is bitterness that they have never been able to obtain help from the union during a strike.

Sam: Of course it is difficult to generalize especially from afar. But it seems to me as if Lewis was working up to this situation. His whole strategy--3 day-week, no-day week, shutting off the mines, emptying the stockpiles and then the differences between the areas--was that. There was no general line but there was a testing of the line and of the men. The machine telling the men to go back was to test and when Lewis saw that the men were revolting against this sort of hit and run tactic and they wanted to strike, he had no hesitation whatever. He is now going through to the end, and the men are solid.

Frank: Let us suppose there was such a possibility. At one point--I believe "Red" told me this--a miner remembered that at the convention Lewis had said "The day may come when you can't rely on me. You men will have to for yourselves." And so the men did go out on their own.

Tedi: It seems to me that Lewis has followed a policy of whittling down stockpiles and carrying on a policy of involving captive mines and the steel union was involved in a strike. Immediately following the steel strike Lewis declared for 3-day week, no-day week. Naturally it has had its effect on the membership and Lewis, as any bureaucracy, thought he could just switch it on and off. But sometimes the thing misfires, and that must change the line. Lewis, like any bureaucrat, moves with this rank and file pressure. So in this sense it was a rebellion. But at the same time they are not opposing Lewis now; they have even forgotten, although Lewis will be watchful of this so-called revolt but if it is wide and the men didn't go back to work although the District mentold them to, then the bureaucrats were pushed into action. The point is now there is no revolt or crisis, although Lewis is brainy enough to use it when he needs it.

Ernest agreed with Ted's analysis and supplemented it with his knowledge of Lewis and the miners in other strike struggles. Betty said it was important to send the relief to the W. Va. miners also because our people were involved. Frank emphasized that ~~xxxxxx~~ no one had considered it to be an open revolt against Lewis.

Harry: I am in general agreement with the method of procedure (Ted had suggested getting the general ~~xxxx~~ line straightened not out and informing the NO) with this little amendment. We are/in a position to decide party policy on these things. This is just an informal meeting of 3 branches involved directly or indirectly in this issue. This outline of the thinking of the comrades here--if we reach an agreement here--should be sent to the office--and we hope the minutes are as complete as possible of all the discussion here--so that they can have all material possible. It is up to Morgantown to decide its policy with the help of the National Trade Union Committee--we will help in the formulation as much as possible. It seems to me in general that the thinking outline is more or less correct and there is not a sharp difference.

The word "Revolt" was not chosen by us, but by the press; it is an unfortunate word perhaps. The meeting was mainly for informational purposes. We now see from the Morgantown report that the District men there did try to get the men back to work more than in other areas such as Brownsville. But to attempt to generalize this into a "revolt" would be dangerous. The comrades themselves report there is no such opposition between the District and the men now. There is of course such a situation in any union between the men and the International but I think we would be overhasty if we tried to equate the Lewis bureaucracy with the others, say in the steel union. (Every steel worker would still prefer Lewis as leader.)

The struggle Lewis now leads is important for the whole labor movement--it is an attempt to rend the Taft-Hartley Act null and void. We cannot assume that he fell into this struggle accidentally. It would be foolish to assume that the men pushed him into this accidentally. Lewis has indicated for the past 5 years that he has headed for this type of struggle. From the moment that Taft-Hartley Law was passed and which he followed up by refusing to sign the affidavits--he indicated it also in the conversation with Alinsky if you have read his "John L. Lewis" you read it there) and he has indicated it in his latest telegram where he said that he doubts mass coercion is possible. John Lewis's bureaucracy is different from other trade union bureaucracies whose strength flows only from the machine. John L. Lewis stands on a double prop (1) he has his machine, and (2) he has a deep loyalty from the miners and because of that stand he takes positions distinguished from all other bureaucracies.

I believe the Morgantown comrades have done one of the finest jobs of any of our trade union fractions. Morgantown has pushed the situation from a local question and made it into a national one and in extending the strike they also seized upon another basic issue: relief, which is the center of the question now. Everything else is set--the men have determined not to go back to work. And now in getting the relief issue and getting the backing of the district they have seized the center of the problem again.

When I talked to Morris and Ward I urged that a comrade be sent to Morgantown to be on the spot. They told

me it was possible (If you comrades have heard the plenum report and the state of finances you can see that). They suggested instead that if possible we attempt to meet with Morgantown and get the situation cleared up. They had other fears on the basis of the trade union fraction-- if the movement or committee had an artificial form and there was no mass backing, then of course our comrades could be cut down and that's a danger that should never be lost sight of. But we get a different picture here.

The relief seems to stand on its own feet and it has received official sanction. The Morgantown comrades are on the right road and the next big thing is to make this Morgantown relief the biggest thing. The important thing is now to get aid from steel and other unions and to make a success of this venture. The NO proceeds on this assumption--that one of the most important tasks is to maintain our people inside of the unions and any action undertaken without mass support would endanger that as the bureaucracy would cut down our comrades. But once we act with caution and have mass backing, then we can proceed.

The rest of the discussion in which Sam, Ted, Freddie, Jerry and Walt participated, showed there was general agreement in the limitation put on the word "revolt", in the importance of the relief work now, and in the caution with which our comrade proceed in the trade union. Thereupon Sam moved that once we understand the informal nature of this meeting we approve the general line as outlined by Harry in his summary. This was passed unanimously.

In addition to the details of how to go about getting relief for the miners in Pittsburgh and extending it further, the only other point was taken up was the question of writing for the Militant and the Morgantown comrades were urged to do so and do so promptly, in time for Tuesday deadline, that the Militant may report actual events in the field and picket lines of miners and jailings that are seen nowhere in the capitalist press.

At this point Frank asked whether it wasn't possible for Freddie who is coming down in any case next Sunday to give a plenum report to come there earlier and stay there since the comrades could use an experienced person there. A quick consultation between El and Freddie, and it was decided that Freddie could get down to Morgantown Friday and stay there for a few days.

Meeting adjourned at 6:15: it had convened at 1:15, with an intermission for a lunch at 3.

FF, Secy.