

# Build the Workers International Relief

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

THE time is at hand when the most serious attention must be given to the building of the Workers International Relief into a mass organization. The need for such an organization is now so plain that all should see it. It must be conceded that the systematic building of the W.I.R. has been badly neglected in the past. In consequence, when strikes develop we are placed at a great disadvantage because there is no established relief organization at hand. This weakness must be overcome without delay.

We may now look forward with a perspective of increasing strikes on a mass scale. The miners' strike and the strikes in the textile industry are only a forecast of what is to come. The workers' wages are being slashed in practically every industry and their conditions are being made worse. Anyone who has even the slightest contact with the masses and understands what they are thinking of, realizes that the workers are not going to submit passively to this increased exploitation and impoverishment. Strikes are in prospect—strikes in many industries. Militant mass struggles.

If we thus foresee a developing strike wave, we must at the same time see the need for a relief organization and the systematic collection of strike funds and supplies. There seems to be a notion current that all strikes in the present period are short and sharp, and that no relief is necessary. Often this idea is more or less clearly expressed by word or action. But it is incorrect. Even if the tendency is towards shorter and more bitterly fought strikes, nevertheless, in the strikes that we now face,

the question of relief, because of the workers' great impoverishment, is very important.

The present mine strike illustrates this fact. No sooner had the strike begun than the demand for relief was of the most urgent character. In fact, so poverty stricken were the workers, that almost immediately, as they stepped out of the mines, they had to be put upon the relief list. In many cases, workers on the job actually negotiated with the pickets regarding relief, stating that they had no way of living even for a few days if they stopped work, unless they were assured of a minimum of relief. In some instances employed miners, in starvation conditions, came to the strike relief soup kitchens to beg meals. The question of relief, in the form of tents for evicted miners, is also of great importance in this strike. While the whole body of workers ordinarily do not have to be put on the relief list at the outset of a strike, it is nevertheless highly demoralizing to all the strikers if even a minority are actually forced into starvation and back to work because of lack of relief. Even a small amount of relief goes very far in such a situation to prevent demoralization. Lack of relief has played a very great part in weakening the coal strike.

If we agree that relief is important in holding solid the ranks of strikers, we must perforce admit the necessity for the maintenance of a permanent organization for the collection of such relief. This is the Workers International Relief. It is a terrific waste of efficiency on our part to have to create a new relief machinery every time a big strike develops. This of course translates itself into a great falling off in the possible amount of relief collected in connection with the given struggle. Undoubtedly if the W.I.R. had existed on a mass basis at the outset of the coal strike and had been able immediately to set a strong apparatus in motion collecting money and food, several times as good results could have been secured. The strengthening effect upon the strike would have been very great, even small amounts of money, skillfully expended in relief work, going a long way in sustaining a strike.

In considering the necessity for such an organization as the W.I.R., we cannot confine ourselves simply to the question of the physical support given strikers thru money and food collected. Basically important is the fact that a strong relief organization, by being able to take up the question of the given strike, far and wide among the ranks of the workers and their organizations, can do a tremendous amount of valuable educational work. It is a powerful instrument for awakening the class-consciousness and class solidarity of the workers. Approaching the workers upon the basis of contributing to strikers is one of the easiest and most effective means of reaching them with solid propaganda about the class struggle.

The W.I.R. is holding its national relief conference in Pittsburgh, August 29 and 30. This is timely. The conference will take up the question of developing the relief campaigns in support of the present strikes in the mining and textile industries. It will give special attention to the need and methods of building the W.I.R., to the relationship of the W.I.R. to the revolutionary unions, and to the World Congress of the W.I.R. Every support should be given to the W.I.R. Conference. The mine and textile strikes, the most important struggles that have developed since the beginning of the industrial crisis, are re-emphasizing the necessity of building the W.I.R. The Pittsburgh Conference should be a milestone in the accomplishment of this task.

## of the War Pre- paring On Now!

DEPARTMENT  
GENERAL DEPOT  
MASTER SUPPLY OFFICE  
1000 5th Street

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

Under the National Defense Act, it is the policy of the Department to ascertain your production capacity and to determine the quantities which will meet the requirements of the Army.

Under this, the Department is now engaged in making a survey of the production capacity of the various industries with a view to placing tentative orders for materials, power and transportation, in quantities which will meet the requirements of the Army.

The President to control, in time of emergency, the production of the various industries, and to determine the quantities which will meet the requirements of the Army.

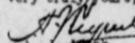
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Very truly yours,

  
A. J. ROSEN,  
Lieut. Col., U.S. Corps,  
Assistant.

In this letter we re-read the language of the