

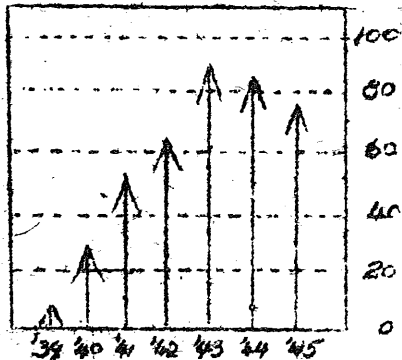
LABOR VIEWS

No. 5 ISSUED BY THE CHICAGO UNITS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS LEAGUE Jan. 8, 1946

RAIL AND COAL WORKERS

get CRUMBS from Capitalist Table

Bituminous Coal Millions



NET WAR PROFITS

AFTER TAXES—Source—
U.S. Dept. of Commerce

Miners' Militancy Squeezes Concessions From Coal Barons

When John L. Lewis signed the soft coal contract with the government last week, the Lewis bureaucracy was given a new bludgeon against the miners the mine barons were given excuse for a price increase and the boss-government had once again successfully intervened against the workers. These three could shake hands all round.

Immediately after signing the contract the

Pity the Poor Railroad Bosses !!

The railroad strike is dead. It was killed by the vicious hand of the government raised in defense of the railroad robbers and the cowardly betrayal of the union leadership. There can be no doubt that the cause of the railroad workers was just, that the railroad corporation which had grown financially fat during the war could have granted the demands.

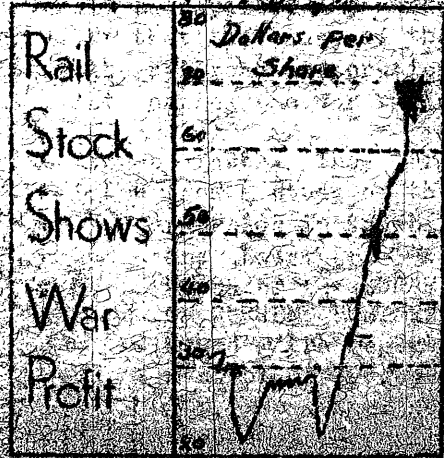
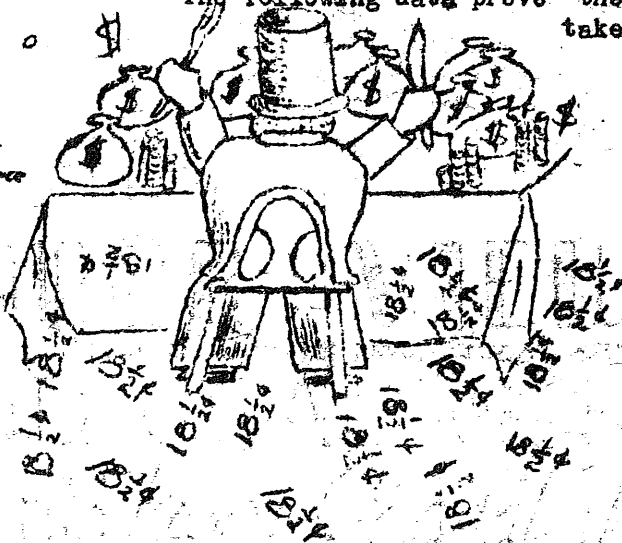
The following data prove these facts. They are taken from a study on the railroads in October and December 1945 issues of the SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS issued by the Department of Commerce.

The annual net income of the railroads AFTER taxes were 16 times larger in the 1942-44 period than during 1935-39. In 1942-44 the railroads netted \$2,442,000,000 by their own records. Yet this figure is still in-

complete since \$2,300,000,000 was spent to improve the railroads outside of depreciation and amortization. (To page 2)

government went into conference with the mine owners to assure them a 25 to 35 cents a ton price increase to off-set the new wage raises. They are still haggling on the exact amount. The coal monarchs are so broket Their net profit after taxes in just the Bituminous coal industry was 400 million dollars in the last six years.

This deliberate practice of raising prices to steal wage raises out of workers' pockets caught (to page 2)



RAIL AND COAL WORKERS... (From page 1)

With respect to amortization - a fund to replace equipment - hundreds of millions of dollars more found their way into the coffers of the railroad magnates. The Federal law of 1940 granted 20% amortization of new equipment for facilities introduced during the war. This meant that the railroads could write off 20% of the cost of new equipment each year, that this cost would figure as operation expenses and would not be taxable.

\$1,000,000,000 were sunk into these "emergency facilities" up to October of '45. Today they have already been written off yet the railroads will continue to use this equipment for many years. The generous government has permitted the railroads to eat their cake and have it too.

In addition the railroads are to receive 10% of their excess profits taxes in refund and are to share the benefits

(From page 1)

Miners' Militancy

up with the miners too in their new contract.

They got the usual 18 1/2 cents per hour increase. Also they will get overtime pay for work after seven hours instead of eight, and will continue to work nine hours a day. On most miners' wages this increase exceeds 25%. Matched to a living cost increase of 40% this is no real wage increase but it is somewhat more than wage raises won in other major industries.

The miners also got a sickness and death benefit fund based on a 5% levy on each ton of coal mined. A medical and hospital fund is already being deducted from the miners' own earnings.

Again, these are a help.

But do such funds really protect the miner and his family from sickness and untimely death? The Federal safety and accident rules which the mine barons so flagrantly violate - according to Lewis himself - do not enter into the new Lewis agreement.

And sickness and death funds do not

of the carry-back provisions.

All this rich gravy has many hands - some dividends, the knocking off of \$1,500,000,000 from the railroad debt and \$3,000,000,000 in funds and government securities "to cover all current liabilities with money to spare".

On the workers side of the ledger the SURVEY reports that the average wage increased from 77¢ an hour in 1941 to 96¢ in 1945 including overtime pay. BUT the revenue traffic per man hour - that is the workers' productivity - increased by more than 40% in the same period. THEREFORE wages took 4¢ less out of each railroad dollar in '44 than in '40.

To the greed of the railroad barons and the hypocrisy of their government, there is no end.

change the squalid and primitive living conditions existing in a majority of the mining towns. Instead of "protecting" the miners from their high rate of sickness and death, these "social benefit" funds merely make it a little easier for them to bear.

Not Lewis' leadership but the miners' determined militancy - shown in their "no contract, no work" attitude during the Lewis' strike truce.

Lewis has deliberately put a brake on the miners' strike effectiveness. He timed the strike-call in the Spring of the year when coal is least needed. He allowed the hard coal miners to work during the strike and now has them out on strike while the soft-coal men are back to work. He bowed to a strike "truce" when the moguls of industry cried for mercy from their profit loss. (Of course, their press and government spoke about the "public welfare".)

(To page 4)

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U.S. GOV'T. AT WARDS

1. ALLOWED BOSS AVREY TO IGNORE UNION ELECTIONS
2. BROKE TWO STRIKES BY "SEIZURE"
3. REFUSED UNION RECOGNITION OR CONTRACT
4. LEGALIZED (IN COURT) THESE ACTS
5. INCREASED COMPANY EARNINGS
6. MADE COMPANY GIFT OF 1/3 MILLION DOLLARS PLUS INTEREST FREE LOAN OF \$1,000,000.

then

whose government is it?

Only Roosevelt's urgent plea for the sake of the imperialist war effort made Avery sign. But when December of '43 rolled around he claimed that the union had lost its majority and refused to sign up again.

By April of 1944 the WLB got around to ordering another election. But the workers, having lost patience with this formality, struck to win their demands. After two weeks Roosevelt ordered the union leaders to send the workers back and Avery to sign a contract. The union leaders caved in. Avery stood pat.

Then Roosevelt sent in the army, another election was held, the union won hands down, and Avery continued to balk. The elections over, Roosevelt turned the plants back to the management. The government had broken the strike so Avery continued to balk. For the workers nothing had changed. They still had their 1941 union majority

The payoff on the Montgomery Ward "feud" with the government came at the annual stockholders meeting on April 26. John A. Barr, assistant secretary of this second largest mailorder house, - gave the lowdown on the government seizure:-

"Seizure of Montgomery Ward by the army had no 'substantial' adverse effect on either sales or profits. The army paid out of government funds to operate the company over \$1,000,000 more than it took in and Ward voluntarily has paid the government all but \$325,000 of that amount. The management believes that this \$325,000 is more than sufficient to offset all the extra expenses and damage resulting from the seizure."

What clearer proof is needed that the government has the interests of the corporations at heart? \$1,000,000 was loaned to Sewall Avrey's company interest free and almost 1/3 of a million was donated outright. But this was no surprise. Since 1941 when the Ward workers began to organize, the government acted against them to the advantage of Avrey.

A majority of the 5,000 Ward workers in Chicago had joined the United Wholesale Employees Union (CIO) in 1941 but Avrey refused to negotiate. The mood was high for a strike - but the labor laws dictated: "Don't strike. Wait for an NLRB election."

The Ward union leaders bowed to that law. In February of '42 the union won the labor board election by a large majority. This merely required Avrey to negotiate with the union, and that's all he did do - negotiate endlessly and refuse to sign a contract. Labor laws were written for Avrey, not his workers. Instead of relying upon the united strength of the Ward workers on the picket line their union

leaders had sold them out to this boss legalism.

U.S. Gov't At Wards

But not the contract. President Anderson of the Chicago Local, complained that the government had placed the union in "a terrible position".

Then by winning a court ruling that the WLB decisions were only advisory, Avery found further excuse not to sign.

It was December '44 now. Ward workers had seen the NLRB, WLB, courts, army, the president, as so many stalls. Even the union hierarchy was opposing them. International President Wolchok apologized "We are doing our best to hold back the employees...from striking." But once more the workers were clamoring for a strike.

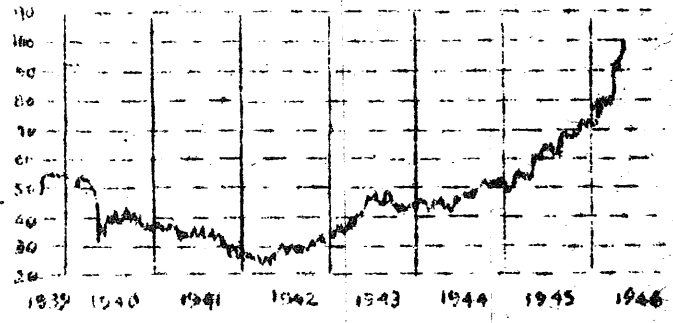
As the pressure for strike mounted, Roosevelt stepped in again seizing the plants. This situation carried "the distinct threat that the workers in some of our more critical war plants may join the strike," he said. The army moved in. But not to help the workers. March of 1945 found the union leaders in court whining, "the rights he (Avery) refused to grant the 5000 or more employees are still withheld from the workers under Army Administration." Avery too had gone to the courts - a very important part of the government - and had

obtained a ruling that the seizure was illegal. The army stated that it could not enforce the WLB decisions of union recognition and 46¢ an hour minimum because of the court ruling.

Finally, when the war had ended, the union leaders called a strike in the fall of '45. But it was a complete fizzle. Four years of government red tape and union fakery had smothered all the workers' militancy. Only a handful joined the picket line and in a few days even these few workers failed to appear. Avery then signed a contract, a rotten affair maintaining the ~~shop~~-shop conditions.

The lesson is clear. Proven many times over. Only by relying on its own militancy and trusting those organizations and those institutions that it itself controls can the working class gain its demands. The U.S. Government, after all, is run for the Avery's.

SEIZURE AIDS WARD STOCK RISE



Miners' Militancy

(From page 2)

Now the miners find that a Lewis bureaucrat, a government official and some third person chosen by these two will administer their sickness and death fund while the hospital fund is in the hands of a Lewis appointee. These funds could hardly be further out of the control of the miners hands.

It is obvious that no one but they themselves should control these funds. But then, to do this they would have to control their own union. Thus, the miners' experience shows us that:

Only when workers take determined action, independent of their own labor misleaders, against the boss and his government will they know real victory in their struggles.

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