

Let Labor Stand On Guard!

an editorial

Workers Age

A PAPER DEFENDING THE INTERESTS OF WORKERS AND FARMERS

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TWO events currently in the news should make organized labor sit up and take notice, for they point to developments that may well grow into a serious danger.

On July 14, Justice Aaron Steuer handed down a decision according to which a labor union is held liable to civil suits damages resulting from breach of contract brought about by a strike. On the basis of this decision, Justice Steuer appointed a referee to assess damages in the \$100,000 suit of the Busch Jewelry Company against the Optical Workers Union, a C.I.O. affiliate.

On July 18, at the annual convention of the American Communications Association, another C.I.O. affiliate, a warning was sounded that Western Union and Postal Telegraph were contemplating sweeping wage-cuts under cover of a new Wage-Hour Act thru the stratagem of raising the hourly wage-rates and then reducing hours considerably more than in proportion. The slash in wages will amount to 8.3%, it was calculated.

The strike at the Busch Company was called by the United Retail and Wholesale Employees Union and the members of the Optical Workers Union joined in. Presumably, merely by striking the union did some "damage" to the business of the company; otherwise, there would obviously be no use in going out on strike. For this, the Busch Company's claims \$100,000 and Justice Steuer has ruled that the union is liable.

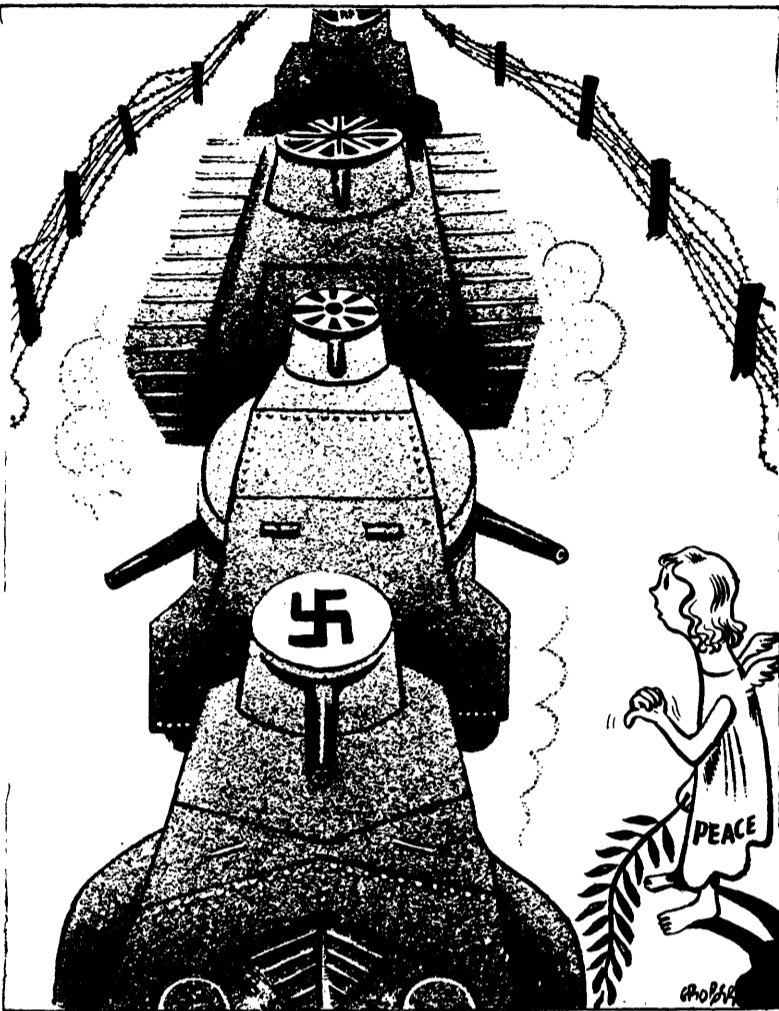
If this action is allowed to go unchallenged, if the Optical Workers Union is left alone to bear the brunt of this monstrous decision, the entire trade-union movement will suffer a terrible blow, endangering its very existence. For Justice Steuer's action is without precedent in New York State and virtually without precedent in the nation since the famous Danbury hatmakers case brought remedial legislation thru the Clayton Act.

"The Steuer decision is very unusual," Elias Lieberman, general counsel of the I.L.G.W.U. and one of the country's outstanding labor lawyers, has stated quite emphatically. "It will have a terrible effect on the labor movement if it is permitted to stand." It will mean a serious restriction on the right to strike and on the freedom of action of unionism generally. More than that, it may even prove to be an entering wedge in a concerted effort to bring about the governmental strangulation of unions by judicial interpretation, with or without the aid of legislative enactment. The Steuer ruling must not be allowed to stand!

The threatened wage-cut by Western Union and Postal Telegraph should make it perfectly clear to all that the passage of wage-hour legislation is no automatic guarantee of adequate wages or even of the maintenance of existing wages. Quite to the contrary, under certain circumstances, it may even be turned into a boomerang and serve as a camouflage for actual wage reductions.

The only answer is a strong, militant, united labor movement, able to make its organized, independent power felt on the economic and political fields alike. Such a movement can stay the hand of a Judge Steuer; such a movement can make wage-hour legislation, and social and labor legislation generally, mean something for the workers of America.

NO PICK-UP



AUTO WORKERS RALLY TO SAFEGUARD UNION

Detroit U.A.W. Leaders Repudiate Dual Unionists

By GEORGE F. MILES
(Our Michigan Correspondent)

Detroit, Mich.

An aroused membership of the United Automobile Workers of America turned upon its Stalinist tormentors and delivered two crushing blows which thoroughly demolished any hope for their dual-unionist schemes.

Most significant was the surprise victory scored by the Martin forces over the insurgents on Friday, July 22, at a meeting of 400 members of local executives thruout the city of Detroit. The meeting, originally called by the Detroit District Council, which has been under Stalinist control since its organization, was intended to serve as a mass mobilization for a rump convention in preparation for launching a dual union. A strong squad of Stalinists, appointed by the District Council chiefs, carefully checked credentials at the door and admitted no one against whom they could possibly think up any objection.

Despite this careful process of selection, the gathering of local union leaders and executive-board members listened to the reports of Walter Reuther for the so-called "middle-rovers" who had visited John L. Lewis in Washington, then to Frank Reid who had headed a pro-union mass delegation of local union presidents to confer with Mr. Lewis, and then turned down every proposal intended to rob the U.A.W. of its autonomous rights as an International union.

The proposal to invite Mr. Lewis to "intervene" was turned down by a five-to-three vote. Another proposal to invite a committee of local presidents to sit in on the forthcoming trial of the suspended officers was defeated by an even larger majority. Discouraged and demoralized, the insurgents failed even to place on the floor the much-advertised proposal for an emergency convention. The pro-union forces then proceeded to pass a motion expressing their thanks to John L. Lewis for his decision not to intervene in the internal affairs of the U.A.W. and followed this with a motion of loyalty to the C.I.O.

Detroit spokesmen for the union are jubilant over the outcome, pointing out that this constitutes the first time that the Stalinists have been so decisively routed in their own stronghold and on an issue on which they had assured John L. Lewis the membership of the Detroit organization stood with them. It is regarded as an expression of the deep loyalty of the mass of the membership to the union, and accurately reflects their resentment at the splitting efforts of the Stalinists.

The outcome of the meeting of local executives in Detroit bore out strikingly the contention of a large delegation of local presidents who, visiting John L. Lewis in Washington on Wednesday of last week, has assured him that the vast majority of the membership stood squarely behind the union and

Tories Plot With Hitler

Secret Anglo-Nazi Talks Revealed Aiming At Four-Power Pact

Secret negotiations between British Prime Minister Chamberlain and German dictator Hitler have been under way for some time, it was disclosed last week in London. To the British Foreign Office, these "conversations," presumably carried on by Lord Londonderry, represent another phase of the Tory campaign of "wooing the dictators." It was regarded as significant that this development should come precisely at the time that the British royal family were on a state visit to France.

The great objective of Tory foreign policy is to bring about a "general settlement" in Europe in the form of a four-power pact between England, France, Germany and Italy. France is regarded as safely in the tow of the British Foreign Office, so that the problem is primarily that of "appeasing" the two fascist powers. The recent Anglo-Italian pact constituted a big step along this road and the present negotiations with Hitler represent another stage in the process.

Behind the Tory policy of a "general European settlement" is the desire to bolster up the capitalist order in Europe, particularly in the fascist countries, where it is most unstable, as well as to isolate the Soviet Union and lay it open to imperialist attack. For the sake of reaching an "understanding" with the dictators, Chamberlain has openly declared his readiness to make all necessary concessions in regard to Ethiopia, Spain, Czechoslovakia and Germany's "lost colonies."

against the self-seeking insurgents.

155 Locals Say No!

The delegation was organized upon the initiative of Frank Reid, president of the Dodge Local, of which the suspended Richard Frankenstein is a member. Indignant at the false claims of the delegation of 13 rebel presidents who claimed to represent a majority of the membership and called on John L. Lewis to take over control of the U.A.W., Mr. Reid sent telegrams to presidents of locals calling upon them to meet in Washington to present to Mr. Lewis the real facts. The response surprised even Mr. Reid. Some 50 local union presidents turned out and about 100 more, finding themselves unable to attend, wired their full agreement with the intentions of this committee.

(See page 2 for a partial list of locals participating in this delegation. —Editor.)

Mr. Reid's delegation, representing some 150 local unions and about 300,000 members, stated that it intended: (1) to prove the falseness of the claims of the 13 rebel presidents; (2) to deny the allegation that peace in the organization can be achieved only thru C.I.O. intervention; (3) to provide Mr. Lewis with a comprehensive picture of the real nature of this long-standing inner-union struggle; (4)

(Continued on Page 2)

U.S. Insists Mexico Pay

Hull Sends Abrupt Note For "Compensation" Of American Investors

After months of pretense of "good neighborliness" towards Mexico, the United States government last week showed its imperialist hand by abruptly demanding arbitration of the acts of the Mexican government during the last decade in repossessing Mexican land owned by Americans. While dealing specifically with the land question, the U. S. note, delivered by Secretary of State Hull to Mexican Ambassador Najera, is clearly meant to extend also to the recent resumption of foreign oil properties by Mexico. In fact, the land issue is probably largely a pretext; primarily at stake are the oil properties.

The American note is considered by the press as of vast significance in its demand for "adequate, effective and prompt compensation." It undoubtedly points to a sharpening of American imperialist policy towards Mexico all along the line. As the New York Times puts it (July 22), "any question on the position of the Roosevelt Administration was definitely removed both for the lands and the oil properties. The Mexican claim that the land seizures were for social purposes was declared beside the point." In other words, the Administration is out to protect the financial interests of American investors even tho it may mean the economic enslavement of the Mexican people.

(A series of articles by Ellen Ward on the Mexican situation will begin in an early issue of this paper. —Editor.)

Knitgoods Unionists OK General Strike

Over 3,500 members of the New York Knitgoods Workers Union, at an overflow meeting held last week at Manhattan Opera House, authorized the union to call a general strike in the knitted-outerwear industry. The meeting further empowered the executive board to set the date for the general strike and to continue with all the necessary preparations.

A telegram was received from David Dubinsky, president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, who could not attend the meeting because of doctor's order, pledging full moral and financial support to the knitgoods workers.

Louis Nelson, manager of the union, reported that negotiations between the union and the Passamenterie and Trimming Manufacturers Association had reached a successful conclusion. As a result of this agreement, the workers in the textile-trimming section of the industry will receive a 10% to 20% increase in wages, a week's vacation with pay and other union demands. The workers cheered Manager Nelson's statement that the union was ready to come to an agreement with the knitted-outerwear manufacturers if they, similarly, would yield to the union's justified demands.

Mr. Potash Tries to Cover Up **SOME PROBLEMS OF SOUTHERN FARMERS**

New Fur Agreement Brings No Real Gains to Workers

By B. BARAZ

In his analysis of the new agreement, Mr. Potash, manager of the New York Fur Workers Union, stated: "In every industry where division of work is established, the system of temporary cards is recognized as a necessity, even in those trades where the contracting system is legalized." Tho he makes no reference to any trade in particular, I surmise that he means the needle trades. In checking up, however, we find that, in the needle trades generally, security on the job is recognized thru an agreement with the employers for all workers in the industry after a week or two trial period; that temporary workers are allowed only in cases where a worker falls out because of illness or because of important union activity—otherwise there are no temporary workers in these trades. Once a worker finds a job and works thru the trial period, he or she becomes a first-class citizen in the shop, for the duration of the agreement, the worker is a member of that shop. In the fur trade, only those fortunate enough to find employment before May and continue to work in May will be entitled to the division of work up to December 31 of the same year. After this date, even these lucky ones will be at the mercy of the boss and may be discharged at his will. This will always leave the majority out and only the minority will be taken care of for eight months.

The administration of the union claims that the wage increase is a victory. Nobody can deny that one or two dollars more is a gain. But in our industry even the old agreement provided for higher wages in extraordinary situations. And the present is an "extraordinary" situation. The little boom during 1935 and 1936 raised the cost of living much too high for the seasonal fur worker. The industry had to consider this, and I am sure that it would be a big consideration in negotiations. Surely, no fifteen-week strike would have been called for the sake of a gain of one or two dollars in wages. However, since the main demand, security on the job, was lost, the administration now lauds this little gain as a big victory.

The Collective July Increase

A collective July increase is really something new in our industry. Usually, some of the fur workers would strike a few days and then bargain collectively for a July increase; in other cases, the increase was obtained without a strike. The increases obtained at that time ran from \$2 to \$15, in some cases even \$20 and \$25 per week. These gains were claimed by the administration to its own credit. I remind President Gold that I was criticized by him, at an office staff meeting, that in shops under my control I got July increases of only \$5 and \$6. Now, the collective July increase gives the workers from \$1 to \$6—and that only to the permanent workers! The majority of workers again are not taken care of. They will have to fight their own battles. The idea of a collective July increase is not at all bad, even tho we consider this increase very insufficient, provided it is applied to all fur workers alike. Our agreement, however, in this instance as well, applies only to the "permanent" workers who constitute a minority. Here, again, the bosses got a concession from the union.

The points about older workers, foremen and contractors are embodied in the old agreement, paragraphs 11, 15, 16, 18. Surely the administration has no reason to boast of these as gains in the new

agreement.

The Partnership Clause

Something more astonishing is the point about partnership. Here, again, the union claims a great victory inasmuch as this year only two partners will be permitted to work and in 1939 only one will. I maintain the administration gave the bosses a concession for another year. To prove my point, I quote the old agreement which provides: "27.a) Only two partners or members of the firm or corporation are permitted to do productive work; b) the conference committee shall set up a joint commission composed of an equal number of representatives to be designated by the Association and the union to study the effects of this provision and, in case the union is in a position to prove to the satisfaction of the commission that the majority of the manufacturers in the City of New York not under the collective agreement are complying with this provision, and that the union is enforcing same, then the commission shall regard this finding as justifying the establishment of a rule by the conference committee limiting the productive work to one partner from the year beginning January 1, 1937." At the end of 1936, the union did prove its case but the Association refused to grant the union this justified clause in the agreement. Now, the union, instead of affirming this point after a fifteen-week strike, gives the bosses permission to work also in 1938.

False Orientation

I maintain that this state of affairs is a result of the entirely wrong orientation of the union leadership before and during the strike. It is true that the leadership did not want a strike but was precipitated into it by the bosses who were looking for a holiday in the trade in order to settle their accounts with the dealers and get rid of their accumulated stock. The union strategists were apparently assured that such a lock-out would not be prolonged. Our union bureaucracy, true to their policy of class collaboration, played ball with the bosses locked out the remaining workers in the shops. In this case, contrary to union traditions, the officials of our union did not answer with a strike. This game continued for seven weeks; in the meantime, the bosses finished up whatever work they had in the independent shops, which were permitted by our union to continue work. When the situation became very serious and the workers threatened to revolt, the union bureaucracy was forced to call a general strike. Here, again, contrary to all traditions, the union announced the calling of the strike ten days in advance, thereby giving the manufacturers the final chance to finish their work. From the very beginning, the union leadership let the bosses know that they were not going to press hard for the main demand—security on the job—tho they repeatedly assured the workers they would sooner resign than sign an agreement without this provision.

During the strike, the Communist Party members of the union and their sympathizers were put in charge of every committee. All other union members, with the best abilities and traditions in union work, were disregarded. Factionalism swayed the strike leadership. One person, who was given a post on the hall committee as a sort of cover for a fake united front, was removed in spite of his devoted work only for the reason that he refused to take part and to urge the strikers to take part in the Communist Party May First demonstration.

Since the union has been united, it has collected over a million dol-

lars in dues, taxes and initiation fees. Once a year for the past three years, a day's-wage tax was collected. But, when it came to paying benefits during the strike, only 15% to 20% of all strikers could get from \$4 to \$5 benefits and the rest did not get anything. During the entire strike, the union paid out no more than \$80,000 in benefits. In view of the fact that there was little activity during the strike, it is surprising that the officialdom claims an expense of \$220,000.

Trying To Cover Up

In order to cover up such a situation, they shout at the top of their lungs about the great victory scored at a time of crisis such as this. But the fur workers know better. They know that the union, despite its big income, entered the strike financially unprepared and with low morale; they know that, only a few weeks before the strike, the union leadership invested \$50,000 in cash in the building it occupies. The same officialdom paid out thousands of dollars to its own committeemen. This was done in order to prepare a well-oiled machine for after the strike. A system of espionage was introduced. This G.P.U. was given the task of following up the "Lovestoneites" and the others who dared disagree with the administration. The leadership knew in advance that the outcome of the strike would not be favorable to fur workers. It therefore prepared its people to try to make the "Lovestoneites" the scapegoat. They began to spread rumors that the "Lovestoneites" were trying to break the strike, that the "Lovestoneites" were agitating the strikers to make a rush on the union treasury for benefits, etc., etc. The fact, however, is that we were instrumental in holding back the workers in this respect. We served as an example. Not a single "Lovestoneite" received a single penny in benefit during the entire strike. Shops in which we worked were model shops in every respect. The workers had confidence in us and, against the will and in spite of the administration, elected us to important committees. But the union officials have to cover up their misdeeds so they are trying to put the blame on the "Lovestoneites." The officialdom knows that the workers do not pay any attention to their statements so they are aiming to impress people on the outside. But here, too, it will not work.

* * *

(This is the second of a series of two articles by B. Baraz on the recent furriers strike. The first appeared in the last issue.—Editor.)

Labor Day Anti-War Day in Harrisburgh

Harrisburgh, Pa.

For the first time in many years, Labor Day will be celebrated in this city. The initiative in reviving the custom was taken by the Keep America Out Of War Committee in response to the request of the Labor Anti-War Council that Labor Day be turned into an anti-war day.

The Harrisburgh Peace Council, an independent federation of peace groups, has just voted to join the K.A.O.W.C. and become its local affiliate. I, Zimmerman, K.A.O.W.C. organizer, recently spoke over the local radio station, under the auspices of the council, on the results of the Washington Congress.

**HAVE YOU A SUB?
GET ONE NOW!**

(Continued from Page 3)

move into towns and cities of the South, there to seek relief. They constitute a threat to the labor standards of the industrial workers who will have employment and they stand ready at any time to take the places of those back on the farm.

Last year, these thousands of dispossessed farmers found a little employment during the cotton-chopping and picking seasons. The current wage rate was around a dollar a day. In spite of the tractors, there was a demand for wage labor because there was a large acreage planted in cotton. This year, of the thousands who are willing to work for any wage, only a few can be used at the wage of 75c per day.

In Memphis, Tennessee, where several thousands of those displaced farm workers are living, truckload after truckload of workers would leave each morning from the east side of Harahan Bridge for the cotton plantations of Arkansas in 1937. Today, in cotton-chopping time, only a few trucks are loading out each morning. There are hundreds who still congregate at the loading place each morning who are unable to get a job at a lower rate of pay. No program designed to overcome the present business recession or to affect greatly economic conditions in the South can hope to be successful without taking into consideration these people and planning projects for their employment. There cannot be more than a semblance of prosperity when the great masses of rural people of the South have no means of purchasing even bare necessities.

The Department of Agriculture Program

The program being administered by the Farm Security Administration under the Department of Agriculture for reestablishing people on the land cannot hope to reach the people who are in greatest need. The masses of southern farm laborers, whether they are tenant farmers, sharecroppers or day laborers, cannot be reached in time to speed recovery of southern agriculture, business and industry.

We feel very strongly that the Department of Agriculture is not the agency of government for handling this immediate relief problem. The Department of Agriculture is a business organization devoted to furthering the interests and improving farming methods for farmers, particularly landowners. We would not expect the Department of Commerce to handle the affairs of industrial labor nor should we expect such an agency to administer relief. Clearly, this is a problem to be handled by the Works Progress Administration.

There is no sound reason for allowing these displaced farmers to go into the cities in search of relief or to join the ranks of the migratory workers, of whom some 200,000 are said to be in the state of California now. These people are largely ex-sharecroppers and tenants from Texas and Oklahoma. The Southern Tenant Farmers Union recommends the adoption of a program to end rural unemployment by establishing the unemployed workers in homes upon land where they may make a subsistence living, supplemented by a public-works program providing employment until such time as industry or agriculture can absorb excess labor and provide jobs at wages in keeping with American standards of living.

It should be the object of such a program to provide each farm family in the country with a home and land sufficient for raising its

own living. Large enough tracts of land should be purchased by the government for establishment of projects housing 100 or more families. Cooperative farming of community holdings should be encouraged under supervision of trained agriculturists. Such projects should be located near centers of population so that, should employment be available in private industry, the workers could go to and from their homes and jobs. The construction of stable bases for such unemployed rural workers would prevent them from so readily taking jobs of industrial workers at lower wage standards, to say nothing of making for intelligent and well-informed citizenry. Houses should be constructed substantially but as cheaply as mass construction will permit. The cost of such rural homes should be held to a minimum and provision should be made for purchase of livestock, cows, chickens and hogs and such equipment as is necessary for each family. Homes should be individual types but built in the form of villages around a community house, school and church and a cooperative store. One of the most serious defects of rural farm life at present is the isolation of the farm people and the lack of recreation facilities. We believe that such a rural community life is the most desirable and that it would lead to an ultimate solution of one of our most pressing problems.

Basis Of The Program

All farming on such projects should be on the basis of a "live-at-home" program, without such cash crops as cotton being grown to flood an already overburdened market. Cash should be provided for the purchase of necessities of life thru jobs on public-works projects, such as the building of schoolhouses, farm-to-market roads, public-marketing facilities for farmers as well as continuous construction of other rural-housing projects, all of which are needed badly in the South.

If such a program were initiated immediately, within sixty days thousands of unemployed workers would be given jobs, building materials would begin to move and additional workers called back to their jobs thruout the South and nation. At least 150,000 families should be established in homes.

In developing such a program of rural housing, we know that men with social vision would necessarily have to administer the projects and we further feel that certification of the families eligible to go on these projects should be determined by federal rather than local agencies. With certification of eligibility left up to local authorities there is always the possibility of local issues entering into the cases and discrimination against Negroes and members of labor groups.

Inasmuch as the recently enacted wages-hours bill does not apply to agricultural labor nor does the labor-relations law, and with farm labor excluded from the benefits of all other social-security legislation, we believe that it is only fair and logical for the government to give some form of security to this section of the rural population. The best security that can be given the farm population is security with land and homes for those who need them.

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