

The reports received from Italy are, in other respects, equally unfavorable for the Fascist trade unions. In Oneglia the Fascisti have tried in vain to win over the metal workers. Out of 650 workers called upon to attend a meeting convened by the Fascisti, a total of five put in an appearance. Equally futile were the attempts made by the Fascisti in Lavagna, to induce the 200 working men and 400 working women employed by a textile undertaking to join the Fascist union. The last factory council elections in Padua also resulted in the defeat of the Fascisti.

THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Twelve Hours a Day in American Industry

By I. Amter.

Sixty-nine thousand men working for the United States Steel Corporation work twelve hours a day! More than 30,000 of them work twelve hours a day, seven a week! Of the 500,000 workers employed in the steel industry of the United States, less than 25 per cent are allowed to work less than 60 hours a week. More than 50 per cent of the blast furnace men, the bessemer mill, open hearth mill, blooming mill, rail and bar mill men, work twelve hours a day. These are the men who do the hard, dangerous work in steel mills, for whom the United States Steel Corporation declares it cannot reduce the hours of work, since it would mean the introduction of the eight hour shift and the employment of an additional 60,000 men. There is a labor shortage, the U.S. Steel Corporation alleges, and the workers demand the twelve-hour day.

What are the facts?

In 1919, 300,000 steel workers went out on strike, demanding collective bargaining, an eight-hour day and a six-day week. The strike was lost, although the men put up a splendid fight. The American Federation of Labor gave no support to organizing the men, and the government openly assisted the employers by sending Federal troops into the steel fields to intimidate and coerce them.

In 1920, Judge Gary, chairman of the U.S. Steel Corporation, appointed a committee of presidents of the companies subsidiary to the U.S. Steel Corporation, to "study the question" of the eight hour day. The committee made no report, but it was distinctly understood that it was opposed to changing to the eight-hour, three-shift system.

The demand for an eight-hour day in the steel industry, has been growing loud: President Harding, recognizing the necessity of appeasing the workers, recommended the adoption of the eight-hour day in the steel industry. Gary once more appointed a committee, which reported on May 25 rejecting the eight-hour day.

Gary contends that the introduction of the three-shift system would mean an increase in operating cost of 15%, that the men do not wish shorter hours, that there is not sufficient labor to supply three shifts a day, and that the harm wrought to workers on twelve-hour shifts is exaggerated.

Engineering Societies, the Interchurch World Movement (an organization of liberal churches), a conference of clergymen of all creeds, and even the presidents of other steel corporations—such as the Colorado Fuel and Iron Co.—have urged Gary to change his mind, but he is adamant. Gary must have his pound of flesh for the privilege he gives his 215,000 slaves to work for him and pile up huge profits.

The United States Steel Corporation is the second biggest corporation in the country—in the land of billion-dollar corporations. The U.S. Steel Corporation was organized in 1901 with stock of \$1,000,000,000—real and water. From 1912—1921, its net profits amounted to \$1,097,000,000. From 1913—1919, its undivided surplus amounted to \$2,240,000,000. On December 31, 1922, it had a property account of \$1,631,000,000. In the first six months of this year, the profits have mounted up to close on \$85,000,000.

The Corporation owns 3,759 miles of railroads and 61,300 freight cars. The owners of steel stock are prominent among the 25 men in the United States who control 82 per cent of the railroads of the U.S., or 211,000 miles of railway. U.S. Steel owns 111 overseas and Great Lakes steamers and, through J. P. Morgan, has a controlling interest in American and British shipping companies. U.S. Steel owns 75 per cent of the country's bituminous coal fields, besides millions of acres of other classes of coal, and 20,000 coke-ovens.

But this does not show the whole power of the United States Steel Corporation. The directors of this gigantic concern are the men who, by interlocking directorates, control the railway

repair shops and the cement and other basic materials of American industry.

Financially it has built up a tremendous power. In 1914, its undivided surplus amounted to \$135,000,000; in 1919 it had increased to \$493,000,000. This surplus would have paid over again the wage and salary budget of 1918, which amounted to \$452,000,000. Furthermore, by manipulating, by charging hundreds of millions to operating expenses, repairs and upkeep (in 1919, the company carried \$200,000,000 on its books for "depletion, depreciation and replacement of funds"), the corporation is able further to increase its surplus and dividends.

The Fordney-McCumber Tariff made a further donation to the Steel Trust, which asserts its inability to pay higher wages. By imposing a duty on heavy steel products, pig iron and other structural steel etc., the government presented to the Trust the major portion of \$251,000,000, which will be doubled to the consumers. In other words, the public will pay a toll of more than \$500,000,000 to the Steel Corporation. There are 21 finished steel products on which the government likewise imposed a duty, this meaning protection to the amount of more than \$500,000,000.

This is the huge power with almost unlimited wealth that is keeping 215,000 workers on a low level of subsistence in the United States and forcing 69,000 to work 12 hours a day.

What is the condition of these workers?

While the steel industries of most countries of Europe, Canada, South Africa, Japan and India are run on a three-shift basis, of eight hours each, the U.S. Steel Corporation declares that it cannot afford to adopt the three-shift system, since it would entail an increased wage budget of 15 per cent.

In 1919, when an investigation of the Steel Strike was being conducted, Gary asserted that the Steel Corporation was "reducing these hours from year to year". Facts, however, disclose that his statement was the sheerest bluff. In 1910, blast furnace men worked 78.7 hours a week, open hearth men 75.3 hours. In 1919, they worked 82.1 and 76.4 hours respectively. The Commission of Inquiry of the Interchurch World Movement, after investigating the strike of 1919, stated that "in the past decade the United States Steel Corporation has increased the percentage of its employees subject to the 12 hour day".

The wages paid in the steel industry are among the lowest in the country. Ditch diggers are paid in the United States 41 cents an hour. The average wage for "common labor" is 55 cents an hour. In order to keep its men, the Steel Trust was compelled to raise the wages a few months ago from 36 cents to 40 cents an hour. The average weekly wage in the iron and steel industry in April was \$272.61. This wage is insufficient for maintaining a family of five in the United States.

What do we find in the living conditions of these steel workers?

Working 12 hours a day, and allowing an hour or more for going to and from work, time for eating etc., the workers spend their time working and sleeping, with no time for their families. As one worker who left the mill remarked: "his little daughter had died within the last few months; he said he had never known the child because he was at work whenever she was awake, or else she was asleep during the day time. He was determined that he would know the other children".

Housing is a disgrace. The families are large, many of the foreign-born workers, who are the majority in the steel industry, having families of ten or over. One of the reasons, that the foreign-born predominate in the industry, or, as Gary complains, the reason he cannot get Americans to do the work is that the Americans refuse to live under the conditions in the steel towns and accept the pitiful wages offered.

The families are forced, in many cases, to live in two room cottages, with no facilities whatever. Beds are in constant service. They are occupied by three shifts of eight hours each. Frequently four, five or more persons sleep in one room. When a family is forced to take boarders, in order to make ends meet, the so-called "home" is turned into a lodging house, which is a hell in which to bring up children.

What is the effect on the children?

In the steel towns, the mortality of children under 5 years of age ranges from 39 to 67 per cent. The average in the census registration cities of the United States, is 27 per cent. In such residential places as East Orange, New Jersey, a suburb of New York City, where the bankers and rich merchants live, the mortality is only 17.1 per cent; in Brookline, Massachusetts, only 10 per cent. The infant mortality is appalling: 255.7 among families of unskilled workers with low wages, as contrasted with 134.7 for the whole community. In Gary, the "model" town of the Steel Trust, the mothers of 279 infants—

68 per cent of those investigated during the period—did not cease work within two weeks of confinement. The mothers of 256 infants continued gainful work up to the very day or hour of confinement. In the lowest income group, 41 per cent of the mothers had to seek employment, in order to supplement the wages of the chief bread earner.

The death rate for the registration area was 14.1 per 1,000. In the steel district it amounted to 16.9 to 23.9 to 23.2 per 1,000. And even these figures are not accurate, since the mortality returns are not kept exactly; hence they may be considered too low.

That the bread earners who work 12 hours a day have neither energy nor time for education and recreation is obvious. Hence "Americanization" Committees achieve very poor results in the steel districts. Schools are provided, courses arranged, yet the workers cannot attend. Foreigners are even kept from taking out their naturalization papers owing to their inability to spend time or money. Thus our loudest howlers for "Americanization" defeat their own plans by their greed.

What are the conditions in the steel mills?

American capitalism is not sparing of the lives of American workers. In the decade 1910—1919, according to statistics of the U.S. Bureau of Labor, the steel workers suffered the following fatalities: Killed 3,255, permanently disabled 9,549; temporarily disabled 412,837. In other words, 425,686 workers were disabled, crippled and killed in ten years. Although the law requires safety devices in factories, they are not instituted. What with the strain and the long hours, workers are not safe in an American steel mill. Insisting upon exploiting them to the bone, Gary refuses to employ men above 40 years of age.

What truth is there in Gary's contentions that he cannot introduce the eight hour shift—even though later he was forced to accept the idea "in principle"?

Gary contends that there is a shortage of labor, and demands that the bars to immigration be lowered. What are the facts? In April, 1923, there were 104.47 persons registered for every 100 jobs open for common labor. In May, 1923, New York State industrial statistics showed that employment was only 15 per cent above that of one year ago. One thousand men were required for work on the Steamer Leviathan, for which 20,000 men applied. 2,000 men and women stood in line, some of them the whole night, in answer to a notice that a few laborers and charwomen were needed.

In 1921, when there were 8,000,000 unemployed, Gary raised the same contention. And yet in 1920, the Steel Trust employed 200,000 men, while in 1921, it had only 133,000 on its payroll.

The steel concerns having an eight-hour day experience no trouble in getting labor. On the contrary, the president of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Co. states that it was the abundance of labor that made it possible for the Company to adopt the eight-hour shift. America always has a "normal" unemployment of 1,500,000 persons. What Gary wants is cheap labor—labor that will do the hardest kind of work under the most adverse conditions and at a shameful wage. He cannot get the American worker to accept such work, and therefore looks to cheap foreign labor to take his place.

Gary has employed Hindu workers to take the place of Americans. As soon as they have had enough of the grind, he has substituted Negro workers. The Southern States are flooded with agents, combing the country for labor for the steel districts. As soon, however, as the Negroes get accustomed to the conditions and realize that they have not been brought to an Eldorado, they refuse to continue at the work. Recently Gary smuggled over the border 5,000 Mexicans, whose turn it will be next to rebel at the vile, harsh conditions.

Gary further maintains that the U.S. Steel Corporation cannot afford to adopt the three-shift system, owing to the expense. The steel industry is working 93% capacity. Production of pig iron is at the rate of 50,000,000 tons a year, which is the record. The price of steel is 32% above last year, while labor costs only 10% more than a year ago.

In June, 1922, Gary stated that the U.S. Steel Corporation could produce at \$2 per ton less than its competitors. This shows how ridiculous it was to put a duty on steel products, since it amounts to a gift to the steel producers. Gary, however, declares, that to put in three shifts would raise the cost of steel 15%. To put an end to the twelve-hour day in the U.S. Steel Corporation would cost \$36,000,000 at the average rate of wage and salary paid by the Steel Trust. Last year, the U.S. Steel Corporation earned \$101,529,310. . . . Hence Gary's refusal is sheerest nonsense.

It would not, however, raise the cost of steel 15%. This is an excuse for Gary to raise the price of steel. The president of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Co. states that, since changing to the eight-hour day, "almost without exception our labor cost per

ton is lower than in the earlier periods". Dr. Howe, of the Federated American Engineering Societies, says: "If labor was changed to the eight-hour shift and paid as much per day as it is now getting for 12 hours work, the total manufacturing cost of the product in the steel industry would be increased only from 3 to 15 per cent. As a matter of actual experience, it is known that some plants have changed from the 12-hour to the 8-hour shift and reduced their labor costs".

It is clear, therefore, that there will be no reduction in hours in the U.S. Steel Corporation if it depends on the good will of the directors of the Corporation and its subsidiary companies. These men are the bitterest "open-shoppers" and even refused to furnish structural steel to firms employing organized labor. They are, at the same time, strong advocates of religion as "simple, sane business sense". "It pays a nation or an individual to follow a Christian course", Gary observed in his report on the 12-hour day.

Harding was extremely interested in the abolition of the 12-hour day, since the strikes of last summer and the setbacks in the recent elections have estranged a large part of American labor from support of the Republican Party. Harding tried to persuade Gary to accept the 8-hour day. He has failed. Now it is up to organized labor.

In 1919, an attempt was made to organize the steel workers. The campaign was led by Wm. Z. Foster, but the American Federation of Labor sabotaged, and the campaign failed. "The Trade Union Educational League" has announced its intention of "Organizing the unorganized". The recent conference of the Progressive Miners Committee in Pittsburgh pledged itself to back up the movement.

Spurred on by fear that the radicals will organize the steel workers and get control of them, Gompers has announced that the A. F. of L. will undertake to organize them. This is merely an attempt to keep the steel workers from being organized at all, or being properly organized. For Gompers will not risk a fight with Gary, the U.S. Steel Corporation and the U.S. Government. It is a cardinal interest of the capitalists of the United States and of the U.S. Government to keep the steel workers unorganized. The miners are daily becoming more radical—despite setbacks here and there. The railroad workers received a sound lesson last summer. If the steel workers are organized and are lined up with the other two categories of workers—and conditions in the U.S., with an approaching decline in prosperity, will force them to a united front—a violent struggle will begin in the United States. This struggle will be the most powerful threat that the capitalist interests and the government have ever received.

The twelve-hour day, the hell of slavery in the steel mills in "free, democratic" America must go. They will go not at the behest of Gary, but of the workers.

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The Women of the C.I. to the Revolutionary Women Students of China

The Oriental Section of the International Women's Secretariat of the Comintern have addressed the following Appeal to the Revolutionary Women Students of China:

Women students of China, Comrades!

In this moment of severest struggle, when military commanders are again endeavoring, at the behest of foreign rulers, to annihilate the revolutionary Chinese students, and to crush the spirit of protest and battle out of your hearts with bloody repressions, we are with you in spirit, and send you our message of warmest encouragement and support.

From day to day the International Women's Secretariat of the Third (Communist) International follows every step of the war of emancipation of the Chinese people and the Chinese women.

For 12 years civil war has ravaged China, for the reason that a set of military commanders bought by foreign robbers are attempting to seize power.

Your villages have been burnt and pillaged innumerable times by the soldiers of the warring armies.

The peasants are ruined and starving. They are selling their daughters. They are forced to take to the cities, where the fate of a beggar, a coolie, or a rickshaw man, awaits the men, and the capitalist factory and prostitution the women.

England, France, Japan, and America have formed a union of blood-suckers for the plundering of defenceless China.

They support with their money the civil war, the militarists commanding the armies.