

Rubber Barons Begin Offensive

New Line Is Pretext for Firing Active Progressives

By **GEORGE PAPCUN**

AKRON, Ohio.—The NRA castigation by the United States Supreme Court had its immediate repercussions in Akron rubber plants. The rubber barons wasted but little time in calling the meeting of the board of directors of the rubber manufacturers association, which started its meeting in New York City on June 4.

The unions in their weakened position have not been combated openly by the rubber manufacturers, but rather through soft-soaping which disarmed them in the matter of grievances since their betrayal in April. And there is no doubt in any of the rubber workers' minds today in Akron that under the pretense of seasonal lay-offs in the rubber industry that the manufacturers, especially in tire, are taking steps to rid the plants of the militant trade union members within.

Second Offensive

This will be the second offensive of the rubber barons against the rubber workers since the betrayal. The first was when the India Rubber Co. was forced to lock out its workers until they agreed to an open shop in the only closed shop tire plant in the entire country. This is no secret, as everyone in and around Akron was well aware of it. And after being out several weeks, picketing the plant 24 hours of the day, the open shop was put over with the help of Colman C. Claherty who shadow-boxed against the India Rubber Co. but took no measures to put up a real stand against the drive of the rubber manufacturers.

The dirtiest part of the whole fake fight of Claherty was that he refused to declare a strike, and got the workers to believing that they merely should try to show the public that it was the India Rubber Co.'s fault, without any real fighting measures to combat the company. This company, which is a small tire building concern, could have been combated even through the weak sabotage methods of asking the members of unions not to buy union made tires. In the main this is the way that the company's trade has been built up throughout the entire country. And once a bankrupt concern, it was able to build a big business and begin to show a profit on the basis of its trade among union members and the strength of its union label.

Lay-Off Begins

The same thing is happening in this present attack on the rubber workers, which the officers of the rubber manufacturers call a seasonal lay-off. It will be merely a means to get rid of the fighting trade union members, to starve them into submission, or to completely eliminate them. In this of course, the rubber barons are helped by the fact that they have huge stocks on hand remaining from the preparation for the strike last April. The leadership of the unions in public statements are refusing to attach any significance to the meeting in N. Y. where all of the leading officials of the Big Four Tire Companies will be present. This despite the fact that the Supreme Court decision on the NRA is expected to be discussed, and the semi-secrecy in which the meeting was called. It was only accidentally that it leaked out in the local press. In spite of the denials of the rubber company it is agreed by most people that the meeting will take up the question of hours and wages. This is especially important because even in view of the price war that has broken out among the tire companies.

Progressives Active

The NRA was used to prevent strikes in the rubber industry during the last 18 months when rubber workers could have gained something through a struggle which was prevented by the cooperation of the officials of the rubber workers' union and the government. And now the weakened condition of the unions no doubt encourages the rubber barons to get rid of the last vestige of unionism in the rubber plants.

The rubber barons, however, are not taking into account the reaction of the workers, who have had a lot of experience, and this may be the beginning of another attempt on the part of the workers to establish a real union in Akron. Workers are already talking about an International. Attempts are being made to mobilize a progressive group to combat Coleman C. Claherty and other enemies inside the organization. This is a slow and tedious process.