

The Lancashire Textile Strike.

By Harry Pollitt.

Two hundred thousand Lancashire weavers are out on strike against the demands of the owners for wage reductions of 2/9 in the £ and for the introduction of the more loom system designed to throw out of employment 50% of the working weavers.

For 19 months the millowners have tried by every means to break the heroic resistance of the Lancashire textile workers to these demands. Already in 1931 the workers after five weeks mass strike forced the employers to withdraw their demands. In months of guerilla warfare under conditions of increasing economic crisis the workers in mill after mill struck against the new terms, demonstrated and picketted in masses and blocked the advance of the employers.

The fight of the Earby weavers in a little village in North East Lancashire for 12 weeks prior to July 25th against a wage cut of 7½%, led the fight which was taken up by 20,000 Burnley weavers. On July 25, the Burnley employers attempted to reduce wages, but the 20,000 Burnley weavers struck work, and to the astonishment of the whole of Lancashire, stopped every Burnley factory.

For five weeks the Burnley and Earby weavers have been on the streets fighting against the depletions of the Trade Union leaders, and the brutality of the hordes of imported police. But the will to victory was invincible.

Now the determined will to fight of the textile workers has compelled the extension of the strike to the whole country, 200,000 weavers have closed the ranks and present a solid front against the employers' offensive.

The savage police brutality, the baton charges and arrests, the ferocious application of Means Test under which thousands of unemployed have been deprived of benefit, the mass unemployment reaching 55%, the strikebreaking and splitting tactics of the trade union leaders who have repeatedly accepted the employers' policy, who agreed to more looms, who offered a wage cut of 1/4 in the £, all these methods of the textile capitalists have absolutely failed to break the fighting will of the Lancashire textile proletariat.

For two years more than 40% of them have been unemployed, the wages of those employed have averaged 38/- per week for men and 29/- for women. But the ranks are solid, and the blacklegs are few and far between and meet the determined hostility of the workers.

The Lancashire cotton workers are fighting in the front ranks of the British working class, which is menaced all along the line by a new wave of attacks on wages under the regime of the National Government, the Government which is leading and directing the most savage capitalist offensive and war preparations. The fight of the Lancashire textile workers is giving the lead to the railwaymen, menaced with new mass dismissals and speedup; to the London transport workers threatened with wage cuts and dismissals, to the printing workers, engineers, municipal workers all of whom are directly menaced by the new offensive.

The Lancashire cotton workers are worthily taking their places in the battle line of the international textile proletarian

which is determinedly resisting the international onslaught of the textile barons. The heroic strike and the barricade fighting of the Vienne textile proletariat, the strike of the Polish textile workers who at Bialystok fought against the fascist and military terror, the strikes of the Japanese textile workers under conditions of unheard-of repression, the preparations of the Saxon textile proletariat for strike against wage cuts—the Lancashire workers add another to these heroic class battles of the international textile proletariat.

The Lancashire textile workers look to the whole of the British and international proletariat for support in their struggle. Already the response to their appeal shows that they will not look in vain. But it is necessary to act quickly, to pour into Lancashire messages of greeting and solidarity, and money for the strike relief actions being organised by the W.I.R.

The most dangerous enemies of the strike are the reformist trade union leaders who already are negotiating behind the scenes with the employers and the government, seeking to find a basis of compromise on which to call off the strike and betray the interests of the workers.

The Communist Party and the Textile Minority Movement are ceaselessly striving to strengthen the strike front, to organise the strike, to develop relief, to develop an elected strike leadership representing and having the confidence of the striking masses. Only in this way can the manoeuvres of the strikebreakers of all shades be defeated. Increasing thousands of strikers are expressing in meetings and demonstrations their support for this line of the Communist Party and the Textile Minority Movement, and are rallying to the slogans: No Wage Cuts! No More Looms! Re-instate the Dismissed Weavers! For a Collective Agreement Embodying Those slogans!

The Opening of the British Trades Union Congress.

London, 5th September 1932.

The Trades Union Congress opened to-day at Newcastle. The report revealed that in the past year the membership of the affiliated unions had decreased by 110,000.

An official meeting was held in the huge City Hall last night, but despite all the leading lights of the trade union movement being billed to speak it was very sparsely attended.

The Communist Party held a mass demonstration in the Market Square which was attended by 2000 workers, and addressed by Wal Hannington and Wm. Allan (of the Minority Movement). A resolution was passed repudiating the class collaboration policy of the T.U.C. and calling for the building of a mass united front rank and file movement. A Lancashire striker who spoke got a magnificent reception, and a collection of 45/- was taken for the strikers.