

Who Are the Gastonia Prisoners?

FRED BEAL

Fred Beal was born in Lawrence, Mass., in 1896, and at the age of 14 went to work in a textile mill in Lawrence, as a bobbin boy at the wage of \$4.48 for a 56 hour week. He was an active strikers in the great Lawrence textile strike of 1912. He was drafted into the army and during the Lawrence strike in 1919 joined the picket line in uniform. He was a leader in the Lawrence strike of 1922, joined the Socialist Party during the strike, and after it was over became a member of the executive board of the One Big Union and secretary of the Socialist Party local. In 1923 Beal took a leading part in the Dover, New Hampshire, strike. When he was arrested 5,000 workers picketed the jail and the militia dispersed the workers with threatening machine guns.

At this time he became interested in the Sacco-Vanzetti case. He soon lost faith in the Socialist Party and joined the Communist Party. After becoming secretary of the One Big Union he organized the Lawrence United Front Committee in 1925. In 1926 Beal played a leading role in the New Bedford Strike. Beal was arrested seven times during this struggle and spent one month in jail with Murdock, also a leading organizer of the Textile Mill Committee.

In September, 1928 Beal took part in the formation of the National Textile Workers Union, being elected on its executive committee. He was made the Southern District organizer and started his work in Charlotte in December, 1928. He organized a local of the union in Gastonia and the membership voted the historic strike when union members were fired from the Loray mill. He was the leading spirit in the hard-fought strike.

ROBERT ALLEN

Robert Allen was born in Rhodies, Catawba County, North Carolina, on March 19, 1903. When he was 6 years old his family moved to West Hickory and when his father got a job as an overseer in an East Hickory Mill the family moved there two years later. At the age of 11, he started school and went for 6 years, when he began to work in the mills. When the world war broke out Allen volunteered but was rejected because he was too young. Later he enlisted. When discharged from the army, he found a job on a railroad in Virginia. He was laid off, came to Gastonia and worked in the Ozark mill until the strike was called in April.

The lives and activity of the sixteen men and women—union organizers and textile strikers—who are being tried for murder in Charlotte, N. C.



VERA BUCH, SOPHIE MELVIN AND AMY SCHECHTER

VERA BUCH

Vera Buch was born in Forestville, Connecticut, in 1897, of a workingclass family. Her father was of German descent, while her mother's people trace their ancestry back to the Pilgrims. At the age of four her family moved to New York City where they suffered extreme poverty. "My recollections of my childhood are all of unceasing struggle against stark poverty," she writes.

When 18 years old she was sent to a sanitarium with tuberculosis. On her return to New York she joined the Socialist Party, but was soon too far "left" to stay in it. After working in the mills in northern New Jersey, she returned to New York in 1925, where she soon joined the Communist Party and became active in the labor movement.

She was active in the Passaic strike of 1926, and worked as a labor organizer in the anthracite region, in Philadelphia and Detroit and helped in the organization of the National Miner's Union and the National Textile Workers' Union. She was a member of the New York City executive of the latter union and went down to help Beal organize in Gaston County.

J. C. HEFFNER

Heffner was born May 1, 1912 at Catawaga County, North Carolina. His father was a mill worker. He went to school until he was 14, when he began work in the Regan Mill in Bessemer City, as a doffer in the twisting room. After a year here he went to work in the Arlington mill and remained there about 2 years.

"Shortly after the strike in the Loray Mill began in April I got a job there. But I did not want to scab so I went around and joined the union."

AMY SCHECHTER

Amy Schechter was born in Cambridge, England and was brought to the United States when she was 9 years old. She has worked as a proof-reader, translator and labor journalist. She worked with the Labor Research Bureau, London, England, 1920-21 and joined the British Communist Party in 1920, the Communist Party of the U. S. A. in 1921. During the mine strike of 1927-28 she was an organizer for the Save-the-Union Committee in Central Pennsylvania and later in the same strike she was a member of the Miners' Relief Committee in Pittsburgh. During the New Bedford and Fall River textile strikes in 1928 she was the publicity agent for the National Textile Workers' Union. She was sent by the Workers' International Relief to direct relief activities in Gastonia as soon as the strike broke out.

SOPHIE MELVIN

"I was born in New York City in 1910. I attended high school for one year. I went to work at the age of 14 in a millinery factory where I earned \$10 a week as a learner. Later I worked in Woolworth's 12 hours a day, earning \$10.80 a week, at the same time attending a business school in the evening where I learned stenography and typewriting and got a job in an office.

"At the age of 14 I joined the young pioneers of America. In 1926 I was sent by the Young Pioneers to do organization work among the children of the textile strikers of Passaic. In 1928 I was the organizer of the Children's Miners Relief Committee of New York.

"I came to Gastonia shortly before the fatal raid to organize the children to help in the conduct of the strike."

LOUIS MACLAUGHLIN

One of the most active of the strikers is Louis MacLaughlin. He was born into a family of mill workers, in 1906, in Atlanta, Ga. When he was thirteen years old he went to work as a sweeper in the Augusta Cotton Mills. Three years later he came to Gastonia—in 1928. He worked for the Manville-Jenckes Co. both in their High Shoals and Loray Mills. He was working at the Loray mill when the strike was called.

"I walked out with the rest and was always ready to do my share to help win the strike. I am with them and that's why I'm in jail today."