

# :: The Dressmakers' Strike ::

By ROSE WORTIS

**A**FTER two years of bitter struggle on the offensive against the unholy alliance of the treacherous bureaucracy of the A. F. of L., the bosses, and the state authorities, the New York dressmakers under the leadership of the new Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union have once more come to the forefront in a general strike to wipe out the sweat-shop system, long hours, low wages and the general conditions of slavery, and to make an end to company unionism in the needle trades.

The mass response of the dressmakers to the strike call of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union is the most conclusive proof that the militant spirit of the needle trades workers has not been broken by the years of ruthless pogrom carried on by the bosses and the bureaucrats and that the new Union has the support of the mass of the workers, who are looking toward it with hope and aspiration to lead them in the struggle for the improvement of their conditions.

The general strike of the dressmakers comes as a clarion call to all workers to throw off the domination of the reactionaries and their class collaboration policies and engage in militant struggle for better conditions. The strike of the dressmakers under the leadership of the new union has more than local significance. In this strike, led by the left wing, the fundamental policies of the militant left wing as against the reactionary forces in the labor movement have been brought to the test and vindicated.

The strike of the dressmakers is a struggle in which not the individual leader but the mass plays the dominant role. This strike demonstrates that, under militant leadership police brutality, court injunctions and other methods employed by the bosses and their agents cannot break the fighting spirit of the workers. The dressmakers strike has distinguished itself by its militancy as instanced in the mass picketing and has already netted concrete gains for the workers.

Workers from additional shops come down daily to swell the ranks of the strikers. There are already thousands of workers who have returned to the shops victorious having gained the 40-hour 5-day week, the establishment of minimum wage scales (which mean considerable increases in the weekly earnings of the workers), and the right to their jobs after a trial period of one week. They are now in better position to win new demands in the future. The effectiveness of the strike, in spite of all statements to the contrary emanating from the camp of the enemy, despite their efforts to send scabs to the striking shops, has compelled many of the employers to capitulate to the Union, and has spread the strike daily to more shops.

These victories of the workers, which have strengthened the base of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union and established it as an important factor in the industry to be reckoned with by the employers, have aroused the ire of the treacherous union bureaucracy which in this strike more than ever before is openly playing the role of the strike-breakers. The brazen statements of Mr. Ryan, President of the Central Trade and Labor Council, calling on the Mayor and the Police Commissioner to aid in breaking the strike of the dressmakers thru wholesale arrests and jailing of workers—the open co-operation given by the Schlesinger's company union to the bosses in their struggle against the workers

—the lying and slanderous propaganda in the capitalist and yellow Socialist press has only served to heighten the spirit of the workers.

On the 12th day of the strike thousands of workers marched in solid ranks on the picket line defying the police and the agents of the bosses, undaunted by the wholesale arrests, which in the first two weeks of the strike totalled nearly one thousand.

The thousand arrests, the blackjacks, the brutality, have only stiffened the resistance and increased the militancy of the fighting workers. The picket lines are broken up with police clubs but immediately are reformed stronger than ever. The women strikers emerge from jail to take their places again in the Women's Battalions to bring more shops out on strike. Those who return to



Photo: A. & P.  
STRIKE PICKETS LEAVING THE JEFFERSON MARKET



Photo L. Baum

FUR WORKERS FACING TRIAL IN MINEOLA FRAME-UP

work in shops where the union has won a victory contribute a day's pay to finance the spreading of the strike. The dressmakers will go forward to the sharpening class struggles ahead with courage, united in the new industrial union of all needle trades workers, fighting every step of the way against the bosses, the labor fakers, and the system of exploitation and oppression.