

WOMEN

PROTECT THE OF YOUR CHOICE

UNION

By ROSE WORTIS

The women in the needle trades have always played an energetic role in all the struggles for better conditions and for a militant union controlled by the workers. In most instances, in these struggles, there were fights on two fronts: one against the bosses; the other was against the treacherous officials of the A. F. of L., who work hand in hand with the bosses to deprive the workers of gains won through bitter struggle and sacrifice.

Last year the A. F. of L. officials, with the aid of the underworld, began a campaign of murder and terror against the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union. This terrorism resulted in the death of Morris Langer, organizer of the Industrial Union, Harry Gottfried, an active worker, and the injury of numerous workers. At this time the women of the union distinguished themselves by their heroism when facing the thugs and saved many of their men comrades from death at the hands of the gunmen.

Gain Better Conditions

Women workers learned in the course of their struggles that the needle trade union is the only union which fights in defense of their interests. Women in the fur trade know that under the leadership of the industrial union they have gained increased wages, the 35-hour week and no discrimination.

These concrete economic gains have made women workers staunch supporters of the industrial union. It is no wonder that now, when all the bitter enemies of the needle trades workers are once more gathering their forces in an effort to destroy the fighting union of the workers,—it is no wonder that they are again in the forefront of the fighting line.

The whole purpose of the NRA is to enslave the workers. Women see, before their very eyes, how the NRA, which is supposed to bring shorter hours, higher wages and the right to organize, how they are be-

ing cheated. They see how it is being used by the bosses as an instrument to crush the fur workers' union. Women workers also fully realize that the despised A. F. of Y. misleaders, with their weapon the N.R.A. are mobilized to destroy their union. They see how the bosses, with the help of police and thugs, are attempting to drive the workers into the gangster-controlled union, the joint council of the A. F. of L.

But the women fur workers have not forgotten the shop conditions during the period from 1926 to 1930, when the union was under the control of the A. F. of L. Then, every semblance of union conditions had been wiped out. Minimum wage scales were completely ignored and the hours increased. Working until midnight, a finisher could barely earn \$15. or \$16. a week. From 1931 on, however, when the industrial union gained control of the shops, the minimum wage scale was re-established and in many instances the women workers earned much more than before. Hours were reduced from 50 to 35. An unemployment insurance fund was established and paid for by the bosses but controlled by the workers. Thousands of fur workers have received assistance from this fund during periods of unemployment.

These women workers know that the fur bosses are the most greedy set of exploiters. They, and the

women in the other needle trades, know that we must struggle for our very life and the lives of our children. Because we know we must fight, the industrial union has begun a special campaign for the organization of all women; not only those who are in the shops, but the wives, daughters and children of the men furriers. This drive is meeting with such splendid response.

At the January 18th mass meeting, held in Irving Plaza, New York City, such a ringing call to fight in defense of their interests, from the militant labor leader, Ella Reeve Bloor, strengthened their militancy. They demonstrated on January 16th in front of the City Hall and demanded the right to belong to a union of their choice. They protested against the brutality of the police. They demanded the right to strike and picket. This is evidence that these women are in earnest. They plan a march of wives, daughters and fur workers to Washington. Here they will present their demands to the highest authorities of the government; to the "liberal" Miss Perkins, Secretary of Labor, and to Mrs. Roosevelt, the wife of the President (who claims to be interested in the welfare of women workers).

Fight Against N.R.A.

The present movement of the women in the needle trades should inspire the women in all other trades to take up the struggle against the strikebreaking activities of the NRA in their own trades. Women should trades union, which for many years rally to the support of the needle has been in the front ranks of the militant trade unions. A victory of the women in the needle trades will help strengthen the union in other trades, will help the women everywhere to fight against wage discrimination in the industrial codes, and for unemployment relief and social insurance for all women, single and married, Negro and white.

Readers of THE WORKING WOMAN, the heroic women in the needle trades call upon you for help. Respond to the call!

Struggle for Livelihood

