

What Happened in the N.Y. Taxi Strike

Boot and Shoe Leaders Work With Mr. Klein

Owner Hires Prokopio to Force Workers Into A. F. of L.

By GEORGE MARTIN

The worst exploited section in the shoe industry are the Shoe Repair workers, who have been working 70 to 80 hours per week for \$12, \$14 and \$18.

The Shoe Repair workers walked out in a General Strike last September, 1933, under the banner of the Shoe and Leather Workers Industrial Union, and won union conditions in over 200 stores. However, Mr. Klein, of the Klein Shoe Repair Company and a number of other chain stores, who failed in their numerous attempts to break the Union, finally hired Mr. Prokopio, who is now one of the managers of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, and established a local of the shoe repairers, transferring his employment office into the headquarters of the Prokopio outfit, thereby forcing the workers to join the Boot and Shoe under threat of loss of jobs.

In our attempts to organize the 23 stores of the Terminal Shoe Repair Company, in which the workers slave 70 to 80 hours per week, our Union declared a strike in the 5th Ave. Store in Brooklyn, and in the F. W. Grand Store of Yonkers. In order to prevent the spread of the strike, the Terminal accepted the offer of the arch scab, Mr. Prokopio, and hurriedly signed an agreement covering all stores, guaranteeing to supply scabs, and allowing the firm to decide the question of hours and wages.

The Terminal Corporation applied for an injunction against our Union and, lo and behold, this supposed-to-be Union representative joined with the Corporation in asking for an injunction against the workers on strike! The following is our exact quotation from the Injunction papers:

"Terminal Shoe Repair Corp. Plaintiff

vs.
United Shoe and Leather Workers Union, Defendants

Giuseppe D. Prokopio, being duly sworn, deposes and says: that he resides at 1042 67th St., Brooklyn, N. Y. That he is the manager of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, Local 563, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

"... joins with the plaintiff (Terminal) corporation in its application for a temporary injunction and the subsequent issuance of a permanent injunction to restrain and enjoin the defendants (U. S. & L. W. U.) and each and every one of them from picketing or otherwise interfering with plaintiff's corporation."

Witness another incident. At the Radow Shoe Repair Company and the store adjoining it in Brooklyn, Rapid Shoe Repair, workers worked under Union conditions with a signed Union agreement, ever since September, 1933. Saturday, April 28th, both firms asked the workers to accept a \$5 wage cut and to join the Boot and Shoe in order to retain their jobs. The workers flatly refused and answered that they were ready to defend their conditions and their Union. Monday morning, when the workers appeared on the picket line with their picket signs, Mr. Prokopio paraded into the stores, declaring them to be Boot and Shoe Union shops. A number of workers who have been sent by Mr. Prokopio to scab, refused to enter the stores when they learned that they were on strike.

Shoe, Slipper, Shoe Repair workers in the Boot and Shoe, raise these questions at your local meetings. Tell Mr. Prokopio and the other Boot and Shoe leaders to keep their hands off Union shops and those on strike.

THE "IMPARTIAL" BOARD

by DeLappe



"Labor Rights" Clause Gives City Strike-Breaking Power

By EDWIN BOLFE

WHAT actually amounts to a new Wagner strike-breaking bill on a city-wide scale was announced last Wednesday by Bernard S. Deutsch, president of the New York City Board of Aldermen, under the demagogic title of a new "labor rights" clause in connection with the pending bus franchise of the Avenue B. and East Broadway Bus Company.

This clause, as already revealed in the Daily Worker, provides for that type of "collective bargaining" in which the employers hold the royal flush. Added to this, moreover, is another and far more ominous provision to the effect that the Mayor or the Board of Estimate are legally empowered to step in at any hitch in the "collective bargaining" proceedings—and that their decisions are to be final and binding.

In an article describing this new clause, published in the New York Post of last Wednesday, Edward Levinson, formerly of the editorial staff of the Socialist "New Leader," and at present a leader of the S. P., attempts in typical social-fascist fashion to blind the eyes of New York workers to its real character. He begins by stating that "Company unionism will be outlawed and collective bargaining made mandatory in all franchises issued by the city in the future."

Levinson conveniently leaves for a less significant spot in his report the fact that this so-called "labor rights" clause "gives the Mayor and the Board of Estimate the right to intervene if it considers questions of hours, wages and working conditions unsatisfactory."

He also adds that the clause "follows the principles laid down in Section 7a of the national recovery act and elaborated on in Senator Wagner's proposed 'Industrial disputes' act."

Amter to Speak at Dressmakers' Forum On Social Insurance

The next lecture of a series being held by the Left Wing Dressmakers Educational Committee of Local 22, I. L. G. W. U. will be given by I. Amter at Irving Plaza Hall, May 16. What the unemployment insurance bill means to the dressmakers will be the subject of the lecture.

Workers who read these words will not be as impressed as Mr. Levinson. They know full well that it was under the "principles" of Section 7a and the Wagner Bill that the Fisher Body strike was recently broken in seven different cities by the Auto Labor Board; that it was under these "principles" that the great automobile strike sell-out is being brought to its vicious completion this week; and that all strikes of victimized and crisis-ridden workers throughout the United States are being brutally attacked, sold out, betrayed, by these very principles which Mr. Levinson so highly praises.

The championship of the new franchise, with the "labor rights" clause included in it, by the "progressive" New York Post is not surprising. Neither will it surprise working class readers to know that this clause in the franchise, announced as having been drawn up by Deutsch in collaboration with Paul Windels, New York City Corporation Counsel, was originally drafted by E. Michael White and William Maslow, both in the office of Commissioner of Accounts Paul Blanshard. Maslow, a lawyer, is a former member of the Socialist Party who was expelled about the same time that Blanshard left the S. P. to assume his \$15,000-a-year post in the LaGuardia Fusion administration.

The reactionary New York Herald Tribune is more candid, but hardly less elated than the Post, in announcing the new franchise. It states the following in its headlines very bluntly: "City to Demand N. E. A. Power in Bus Grants—New Franchises Drafted to Permit Intervention in Disputes With Workers—BACKS COMPANY UNIONS..."

Yes, the Herald-Tribune, unlike the liberal and progressive Post and its socialist reporter, unlike the former S. P. members who originally drew up this vicious anti-labor clause, openly rejoices in this new attack on the living and working conditions of the workers.

New York workers should not be fooled by the demagogic veneer which LaGuardia and his supporters in various camps are trying to smear across this local replica of the Wagner Bill. Active resistance and opposition to this measure, which places arbitrary strike-breaking powers in the hands of the city administration, should be initiated

Strike Proved Myth of Talk About Unshakable Confidence in the Gov't

Exploded Myth That American Workers Will Not Accept Leadership of Communists; Blasted Red Scare Theory

By ROSE WORTIS

(Assistant Secretary of the Trade Union Unity Council)

The two strikes of taxi drivers which took place in a period of two months are events of great importance to the labor movement. These strikes are indicative of the new strike wave which is developing among the hitherto unorganized workers and show their determination to fight the starvation program of the bosses.

During the first strike the taxi drivers thought that they had the support of the government in the person of LaGuardia. The sellout settlement put through by LaGuardia jointly with Judge Fanken taught the taxi drivers that the N. R. A., supported by the politicians of the Socialist Party and the A. F. of L., is nothing but a strike-breaking instrument in the hands of the bosses to oppress the workers. The class struggle has taught the taxi drivers not to trust the new promises of the Regional Labor Board, which attempted to force them back to work before the main demands of their strike had been settled.

The strike of the taxi drivers involved some very fundamental issues. Outstanding among them was the struggle against company unionism and the right of the workers to be organized into a union of their own choosing.

Developments That Led Up to the Strike
The conditions of the taxi drivers for years had been growing more miserable from day to day. In no other industry were the workers subjected to such exploitation and humiliation. The normal working hours ranged from 12 and 14 to 16 hours. The workers were never sure of their pay. In many instances they returned home after a 12 and 14 hour day without any pay. In addition to this, these workers were subjected to the most petty tyranny of the police inspectors and are a prey to all sorts of police politicians.

For years the resentment of the taxi drivers against the unbearable conditions was growing until finally it broke loose into a spontaneous strike of 1,000 drivers. The companies at first did not notice the strike seriously, thinking that the strikers did not have enough strength to stand up to their rights. The militancy shown by the workers in the first strike sounded the danger signal to the companies. The companies realized that the calling off of the strike was only a cessation of hostilities, that the fire of resentment was smoldering.

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Union Leaders to Hear Stachel Speak On C.P. Convention

NEW YORK.—A meeting of all leading functionaries in the trade unions will be held on Tuesday, May 8, at the Workers Center, 2nd floor, at 7 p.m.

Jack Stachel, acting secretary of the Trade Union Unity Council, will make a report on the 8th Convention of the Communist Party and the immediate problems facing the trade union workers in New York City.

Metal Chiefs Don't Oppose \$8 Wage Cut

Leaders of Spinners' Union Help Police in Spying on Worker

By J. LUSTIG

THAT Caruso, Kastelak, Sperling and Co., leaders of the Metal Spinners' Union of Greater New York, are running the union on a racketeering basis, was proved recently when they took no action on an eight dollar wage cut in the Cromwell Silver Co., although workers there had the support of 70 men in the Silver and Hollow Ware Local of the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union.

In order to get rid of Harry Zeller, another shady character in the union leadership, Caruso called a strike in the Empire Silver Co., where Zeller works, even though the men in the shop did not want to strike.

Caruso Backs Out

Caruso and Sperling approached the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union with the proposal that it call out 80 workers in the Empire shop, with the purpose of forcing out Zeller. Realizing the selfish aims of Caruso in this action, the Industrial Union suggested a shop meeting where reasons for the strike could be discussed. This Caruso refused to do, knowing that he could give no good reasons for calling the men out.

After this the leaders of the Metal Spinners Union started a campaign to split the Industrial Union by trying to recruit solderers and polishers into their organization.

Sperling Aids Police

One of the spinners in the Empire shop is in the United States illegally. When he refused to follow Sperling, the M. S. U. business agent, he was reported to the immigration authorities. In order to avoid the Federal agents he had to leave his job. Rumors are now current that Sperling was the police spy.

After these actions on the part of the Executive members of the Spinners Union, the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union issued a statement to members of the M. S. U.

This open letter has resulted in hope from the rank and file that new elections to the Executive Board will result in the cessation of racketeering and unity from the Industrial Union.

Any one who stands in the way of unity between the workers of the two unions will be swept aside by the will of the workers to unite.

at once. Organize without delay in all trade unions, in all locals of the American Federation of Labor! Draw up your protests against this anti-labor bill immediately, and send them without fail to Mayor LaGuardia at City Hall!

At meetings of the militant left wing unions resolutions should be framed. Rank and file members of the A. F. of L. should see to it that this new attack on workers' rights will not, as the bosses and their tools in the city government think, go unanswered!

Strike Proved Myth of Talk About Unshakable Confidence in the Gov't

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in the hearts of the workers and was bound to let loose within a very short time. Knowing of the disappointment of the workers with the sellout settlement, aware of the fact that the union had not yet been consolidated, the companies considered this an opportune time to challenge the union and to attempt to establish a company union controlled by the bosses.

Accordingly they proceeded to force the workers into a company union and when the chairman of one of the Parmelee garages refused to join, he was discharged. The workers in the rest of the garages of Parmelee realized the meaning of this challenge. They promptly responded with a strike which paralyzed the Parmelee fleet.

Parmelee Key Fleet

The leaders of the Trade Union Unity Council, in discussing the situation with some of the leading members of the taxi drivers, advised them to concentrate their efforts in winning the strike of the Parmelee, because the outcome of this strike would be decisive in the entire industry. We pointed out to these leading comrades that the union had just been born but not yet consolidated, not yet ready to meet a new test of strength, that there was some disappointment among the workers with the outcome of the strike which must be overcome. We had no doubt that the taxi drivers would respond in mass should the union decide to extend the strike of the Parmelee to a general strike.

However, we knew that in this strike the union would have to contend with much greater obstacles than in the first strike, not only on the part of the fleet owners and the city administration, but also on the part of the Socialist Party. We knew from our experiences in other industries that the Socialist Party, whose leaders, Panken and Levy, had been discredited among the taxi drivers, would stop at nothing to sabotage the strike, and, as in the case of other industries, such as fur and shoe, would openly align themselves with the bosses to defeat the strike led by militants.

At the first meeting of the executive council, called to consider the question of the second general strike, Gilbert voted against the strike, but since he could not convince the others he agreed to the strike at the second meeting.

The leadership of the union did not fully realize these difficulties and yielded to the pressure of the workers to extend the strike on a general scale.

The second strike of the taxi drivers will remain one of the most militant pages in the history of the labor movement in New York. For a period of two weeks, the taxi drivers fought against the most powerful combination of enemies, which included the city and federal administration, the powerful fleet owners controlled by General Motors. They encountered a wall of opposition and sabotage from the leaders of the Socialist Party and the A. F. of L., who threw out the committee of strikers who came to appeal for assistance to their local meetings. Relying only on the support from the militant sections of the labor movement, the taxi drivers carried on a battle which aroused the greatest admiration of the entire labor movement. This battle placed this hitherto unorganized, undisciplined and what had appeared to be backward workers in the front ranks of the American labor movement.

Militant Leadership

The experiences in the first strike taught the workers that the only way to defeat the bosses is through militant struggles. The rank and file leaders of the strikers, Orner, Gilbert, Cantor and Rabin, coming from the ranks of the workers, learned a valuable lesson from the first strike. Instead of permitting themselves to be closeted in conference for days in succession, as was the case in the first strike, leaving the workers in a state of suspense and expectancy, without any leadership, they gave up their entire time toward organizing and mobilizing the workers to win the strike. It was their inspiring leadership that kept the ranks of the workers united and made possible the militant demonstrations which paralyzed the industry and took

every taxicab off the streets of New York. It was their close contact with the masses, their policy of taking the masses into their confidence on every step in the negotiations, that made possible such a close bond of unity between the leaders and masses.

During the first week of the strike, when the N. R. A. came forward with a proposal to return to work before a settlement, the leaders of the union, benefitting by the experiences of the workers in the Fifth Ave Bus, the Budd Co. and the Weirton Co., refused to accept this strikebreaking proposal. In this they were unanimously supported by the strikers. They decided to carry through a vote under the auspices of the union to show the taxi drivers' stand on the question of the union. However, the leadership at all times left the door open for negotiations that would be satisfactory to the workers.

This forced concessions from the bosses. At the end of the first week of the strike the companies were forced to agree to a plebiscite which meant a complete victory for the union.

The union called a meeting at St. Nicholas Arena Sunday afternoon which was attended by 8,000 workers. At this meeting the workers again reiterated their readiness to submit to a plebiscite, but adopted a resolution demanding that all workers be allowed to participate in the vote, that the vote be carried through on one day and that the union be permitted to have its watchers. The capitalist press which was thrown into panic by the militancy of the workers and was looking for an opportunity to arouse the public against the strikers seized upon this opportunity and came out with big headlines that the strikers had rejected the plebiscite. The very news printed below the headlines gave lie to this statement. However, this is now being taken up by the Socialists in an effort to discredit the rank and file leadership.

Forced La Guardia to Agree

The continuous militancy of the workers forced the companies and the LaGuardia administration to agree to the original proposals of the union.

At this point the treacherous agreement in the auto industry was signed by William Green, president of the A. F. of L. This agreement practically legalized and gave recognition to the company union. As soon as the news became known, General Motors ordered the fleet owners to withdraw from the plebiscite and sent its lawyer to New York in an effort to break the strike on the basis of the Roosevelt agreement. La Guardia immediately washed his hands of the plebiscite plan and proposed the auto agreement.

Again the rank and file leaders of the union in consultation with the workers, rejected this offer, since it would mean a defeat of the strike and legalization of the company union which was the main issue in the strike.

These facts give the lie to the slanderous propaganda of the Socialist Party that the leadership of the Manhattan local refused to settle the strike. The Socialist Party will not succeed in its vicious attack since the facts are known to thousands of taxi drivers.

(The final section of Rose Worts' article dealing with the shortcomings of the taxi strike will be continued in next Monday's Trade Union Section.)

Industrial Union Calls Tailors to Convention

NEW YORK.—A call for a national conference has been issued by the Custom Tailoring Workers Industrial Union, to be held in New York on May 19, 1934. The purpose is to unite all the Custom Tailors for mutual support and assistance in the struggle for better conditions.

This conference will lay the basis for a national organization, to be based on a militant program. The conference will present a united front of all custom tailors against the proposed code.

Workers are urged to call immediate meetings of their locals, shops, and unorganized groups, and elect delegates to the national conference. The address of the union is 49 West 46th Street, New York City.