

Bankers and "Amateur" College Football

By MARTIN ABERN

Capitalism turns, or tries to, all it touches into cold cash. From so-called legitimate business and industry, from brothels or from "pure" amateur sports, the aim is money—profits. Employers are broad-minded: they seek their profits without discrimination from all possible sources. And now the bankers have laid their hands on the cash boxes of the college athletic departments. Amateurism is once again defiled. But money makes all things holy.

The Business of Sports Was Very Good in 1927.

1927 saw the greatest crowds in history in attendance at sport events of every description. Indeed we have mass movements toward football fields, ball parks, boxing establishments, etc. In this sense we can say that sports are a mass movement. But of course, the real aim of sports, mass participation and physical upbuilding, is not realized under capitalist conditions. The masses are but spectators to events played by a few skilled ones and profited from financially by even a smaller few.

The Big Fight.

Over a 100,000 persons crashed their way into the Soldiers Stadium in Chicago to witness Jack Dempsey and Tunney slap away at a few rounds of boxing and a like 100,000 watched the college football teams of Notre Dame and Southern California muss each other "for the glory of God and college," also at the Chicago stadium. Attendance records were broken by numerous colleges and universities, as were also those of bicycle racing, boxing, hockey, etc.

College Spirit Becomes Labor-Hunting, Ku Klux Spirit in Labor Struggle

Sports are pretty well commercialized and recognized so by more people all the time. But college football has paraded always as a pure amateur sport in which the players and the student body are interested through loyalty, enthusiasm and so on for their Alma Mater. As a matter of fact, the enthusiasm, noise and rivalry worked up by the colleges is only the Rotarian, Kiwanian and Ku Klux Klan spirit spending itself harmlessly. It is without intelligence and real constructive aims. This same "loyalty and spirit" could just as easily be worked up into a fever for mobbing and lynching of workers and labor organizations which fight for elementary rights of union organization and better wages.

The Colorado Strike.

The Colorado Miners' Strike now going on against the Rockefeller corporations is a case in point. With a few militant exceptions the student elements are being lined up against the fighting strikers. Some are scabbing at this very moment. This is the common case in the United States. Very often the athlete is the leader of scabby and reactionary elements of the student body. . . . It would be interesting to point out how these "amateur athletes" live after leaving college and what is the trend of "college spirit," but here we are concerned with another angle—the profits from college sports and who gets them.

Vast Stadiums Bring Coin—To Bankers

Many colleges and universities throughout the country in 1927 and earlier built new and huge stadiums to hold the increasing crowds. Michigan, Ohio State, Minnesota, many

Eastern colleges, are but a few of them. Of course this resulted in the employment of thousands of workers, mainly building trades workers. Need I state here that almost without exception the work was done by non-union labor?

The Bankers' Graft.

At any rate the stadiums were built.

Millions of people throughout the country poured their dollars into the college athletic cash box, or so they thought, if they were at all concerned about the matter.

The vast amounts of money taken in did not go to the college players, it is true, so far as one can say. Coaches and other hired help get their salaries. One might assume that the money goes to more equipment and the drawing in of more elements into athletics. To be accurate, however, the bulk of the money goes into the coffers of bankers. Here's how.

Huge Sums Needed.

The building of huge stadiums involves large sums of ready money. Material, wages, etc. have to be paid for. A terrific financial responsibility is put on the college or board in charge. The money for building is obtained in the customary business manner, through loans. The loans are made from the bankers. What has resulted?

"Pure Sport" Proves to Be Money-Maker.

One Eastern University, to cite one example, borrowed money from the banks and built a big stadium. As in all things of business and capitalism, stumps came. Receipts of the games were greatly curtailed. THE BANK FORECLOSED AND NOW CONTROLS THE STADIUM. ALL INCOMING MONEYS GO TO THE BANK TO SATISFY PAYMENTS DUE. What is left goes, we presume, to the athletic association treasury. Many of the athletic directors and committees at the universities are lamenting. Sport, in all its lustrous purity, is being dragged in the mud and defiled. Honesty or otherwise, what delusions are theirs? For nowadays the WAY OF ALL SPORTS IS THE BANKERS.

What can these people do? Quit playing? No payments? How crudely then would be exposed the mockery of the "pure" sports of today! And so the games goes on. Capitalism clutches all in its wake: labor, youth genuine loyalty and spirit and crushes them all on its back-breaking wheel. Workers' Sport Movement Is Answer

To Corrupt Capitalist Sports.

Only the workers, and particularly the working youth, can solve this problem. Youth needs its amusements, its sports and games. It needs physical development and recreation from its labors in field, factory, mill, mine or school-room. Sports are needed and should be participated in by all in an open, honest, comradely fashion: the spirit of fun and development; and not with the cheap, profit aim and competition methods of the business men who control and dominate sports of today and who wither and corrupt all they touch.

A workers sport movement is the answer to capitalist sport corruption. The labor movement must begin to give consideration to the wide development of sports in trade unions, in the shops, etc. and steer clear of capitalist connection and the profit aim. Class sports by and for the working class is the answer to Bankers and Sports.

From Historian to Hysterian

By A. BIMBA.

(Continued from Last Issue.)

A Few Crimes of Mr. Oneal.

After reading Oneal's tirade against my book I opened his book, "The Workers in American History," at random to see if my critic is entirely free of the errors and blunders. And here is what I found:

On page 168, Chapter X, embracing the period of the most important and most militant labor movement of America, starting with 1858 and ending with 1888, he names "An Era of Violence." Only a bourgeois intellectual could dare to give such a name to so important a period.

In his discussion of Lincoln (pp. 172-3) he says nothing of Lincoln's expressions against interfering with slavery where it existed, and leaves the impression that the republican party was the champion of the slaves.

On page 180 Oneal deals with the great railroad strike of 1877. During that memorable strike in Pittsburgh alone 26 workers were killed by the government forces and employers. even mention a single case of the most Our pioneer historian, Oneal, does not bloody attacks upon the workers. He does not utter a word about the slaughter of the workers by the ruling class in that strike.

His treatment of the Molly Maguires (p. 181) is drawn from prejudiced sources and joins hands with the provocateurs against the miners. He treats the Haymarket affair of 1886 in the same way. I think these random examples suffice to indicate that our eminent historian, Mr. James Oneal, himself has committed many very serious crimes—much more serious

ious and fundamental than those he was able to cite against me.

—A. BIMBA.

Mr. Calhoun On A. Bimba's Book.

My Dear James Oneal:

Are you game to publish this letter in The New Leader?

I examined the manuscript of Bimba's "History of the American Working Class" and recommended its publication. While I did not take time to check up on details, I was satisfied with the evidences of exhaustive study. I knew that the book was not the last word on the subject; but I was sure that it represented a great advance.

I have just gone through the book again, and in spite of your criticism, I am satisfied that the book does, in the large, convey a valid, instructive, and impressive picture of the fortunes of labor in the United States. To be sure there are incidental flaws, as is to be expected in so vast a job, but I doubt whether any of them are of a sort to spoil the total picture in the minds of the people for whom this book is intended. University specialists are to be sure, entitled to apply their own standards.

My disappointment at your reaction to Bimba's effort is the deeper because of my memory of my use of your book as a text in college classes in the years before the war. In those days, we could take a man's contribution and use it gratefully, even though we might have picked flaws in it. It is too bad that another spirit prevails today.

ARTHUR W. CALHOUN,
Brookwood, Katonah, N. Y.

(From the New Leader, Dec. 17, 1927.)

Hunger

The same kind of hungry eyes
That look into Tiffany's diamond window
And then wonder whether
That ten thousand dollars
Would not be better invested
In Steel, preferred and common,

Look at the buns in a Busy-Bee window
And then wonder whether
That last quarter
Would not be better invested
In Sleep, preferred and common.

—SAMUEL CAMIEL.

In Memoriam

(Maricopa Slim was a railroad gunman on the Southern Pacific in Arizona. He was notoriously brutal. He was later killed by a Negro tramp.)

Where crawls the deathly rattlesnake
And Gila monster slowly grim
Along the sullen desert-ache—
There once lived Maricopa Slim,
As low, as foul as any poison thing;
Cursed be the likes of him!

Rest not in peace, you murderous scamp,
Whose cudgel beat the young and old;
Whose pistol dropped the friendless tramp—
All, all for the wage of gold.
I'd make these words your epitaph;
Here lies the serpent-souled.

—H. H. LEWIS.