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LABOR ACTION

JANUARY 28, 1946

A PAPER IN THE INTERESTS OF LABOR

ONE CENT

Labor Needs General Strategy Board to

UNIFY THE STRIKE ACTIONS!



LOS ANGELES—Reminiscent of the "Little Steel Massacre," and the recent Hollywood strike is the above scene from the picket line of the United Electrical workers at U. S. Motors. This move on the part of the companies and Mayor Byron's police who smashed heads, beat old men, threw tear gas and arrested some twenty-five pickets was the most violent post-war struggle thus far in labor's attempt to gain a living wage.



NEW YORK—Speakers at the spirited rally of 250 people called by the Workers Party to give full support to the GI demonstrations all over the world include, from left to right: Emanuel Garrett, acting editor of LABOR ACTION and overseas veteran of the European theater; Saul Berg, who served thirty-four months in the South Pacific; Eugene Victor, a navy veteran and chairman of the meeting; James M. Fenwick, combat veteran of the First Infantry Division, and Jack Wilson (photo not included), an AAF veteran.

Steelworkers Strike Eleven Reading Plants

BULLETIN:

READING, Pa., Jan. 22—During a heavy snowfall that later turned to sleet, and then rain, pickets appeared at eleven organized steel plants in this area, employing over 3,000 workers, at 12:01 midnight. The plants were shut down tight.

Mass picketing, led by the militant members of Local 2715, shut down Carpenter's Steel Corporation, which employs 1,800 people. The great bulk of workers employed here refused to walk through the picket line and went home, even though some foremen came out and evidently tried to talk them into crossing the line. By Tuesday, only a few diehards tried to go to work.

This plant had not taken a strike vote and the workers at first were uncertain about going on the picket line. On Tuesday, groups of these workers began to appear on the picket line. A mass meeting of these workers was called for Tuesday evening to lay plans for a union local and to keep the plant shut until their demands are met. On Tuesday morning a committee of ten appeared before the vice-president of Carpenter's Steel Corporation to request that the union be recognized as the bargaining agent for its members and that a wage increase of 18½ cents be granted. This the company flatly refused.

The vice-president of Carpenter's reported on Monday that operations were not affected by the picketing, but by the next morning he had to admit that operations were seriously curtailed. Many old-timers who were locked out and blacklisted during the 1919 steel strike at this plant will rejoice when it is completely organized.

The company claimed that it did negotiate a 15½ cent wage increase with an Employee Representation Committee. But Andres Kondrath, district representative of the Steel Workers Union, charged that the first news the committee had had of this was last week when they were summoned by automobile. The Employees Representative Committee is a company-union set-up, but at least half of the members of the committee are now union members.

No action is contemplated at the Textile Machine Works, because an NLRB election is anticipated.

As the strike progresses here, the organization of the strike is becoming more thorough, systematic and efficient. The men and women pickets are in high spirits and prepared to carry the struggle to the end.

(Special to LABOR ACTION)

READING, Pa.—One of the main developments in the steel strike in this city, and in Berks County generally, will be the expected shutdown of the two largest pillars of anti-unionism in this area, the Textile Machine Works and the Carpenter Steel Co. The workers in these two plants are itching to enter the fight for a decent wage and against the arrogance of the companies. They have joined the union in huge numbers during the past few weeks. The shutdown of these two plants will be a dramatic culmination of the organization drive that has been under way for some time. It will assure the final victory of unionism in these bulwarks of company domination.

The Textile Machine Works is part of the long unorganized and huge hosiery and hosiery machinery manufacturing industry, known as the Wyomissing Industries. Wyomissing, a small borough

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Meat Strikers Rally Wide Support

By PAUL NEWMAN

CHICAGO, Jan. 21—The four biggest "hog butchers" in this city called the "hog butcher of the world"—Armour, Swift, Cudahy, and Wilson—were closed down at 12:01 A.M., January 16, when 25,000 packing house workers left their jobs in the nationwide packing house strike. At every

gate of the gigantic Chicago Stock Yards, pickets were set up—some carrying signs such as "Down With Scabs, Every Worker a Member of UPWA," and "Vets Want a Living Wage." Only those maintenance men and office workers who have a pass from the union are allowed to enter the plants.

Striking for an immediate 17½ cent an hour wage increase, the packing house workers have the complete support of the entire population of what is known in Chicago as the "Back of the Yards." The business men in "Back of the Yards"—a small town in itself grouped around the tremendous meat packing industry—

send food and coffee to the striking workers through the "Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council," a community welfare organization. In every store is a sign announcing support of the United Packing House Workers in their strike.

Support of the strike has also come from the motormen on the "L" trains which go into the stock yards. The trainmen have demonstrated their sympathy with the packing house workers by refusing to take the trains into the yards for the duration of the strike.

The companies have so far refused to go above a 10 cent an hour wage increase, and the government is threatening to "seize" the industry. While the spirit and militancy of the packing house workers is at a high pitch and they are determined to win their demand, they may be in for a long drawn-out struggle.

But the battle can be won and it can be shortened. With the walk-outs of the steel workers and the Harvester workers this week, there will be over 142,000 workers on strike in the Chicago area. The thing for the packing house workers to do now, as well as the workers in all other internationals, is to raise the demand for an ALL CIO Council to map and direct strike strategy against the big monopolist corporations.

By DAVID COOLIDGE

The bungling of the strikes by the top leadership of the CIO and the AFL, the resoluteness of the capitalist employers in refusing to grant wage increases, the intervention of the government with its "fact-finding" new Little Steel formula, all these indicate the correctness and urgency of the position of the Workers Party: the labor movement needs a general staff.

The capitalist class, the capitalist employers, have their general staff. The general staff of the capitalist employers—steel, automobile, packing, electrical and all the rest of capitalist industry—is a political general staff. This includes their Chambers of Commerce, the NAM, their Iron and Steel Institute. These

are political bodies which make it their business to prepare political programs for their government at Washington and insist that the government adopt these political programs.

This is what is going on today right under the nose of labor, right now while over a million workers are on strike, on strike with no strikes are not unified and coordinated democratic direction. The nated. There is no democratically-elected General Strike Council. Labor has no general staff.

The President of the United States, in his message to the Congress, calls for a law giving his "fact-finding" boards more power in the handling of "labor disputes." These so-called fact-finding boards have already demonstrated what their role and function are to be. They will be wage stabilization committees functioning in peacetime, just like the WLB functioned during the war.

The top men in the labor movement have already accepted these fact-finding boards. The leaders of each international union and the leaders of the CIO have already accepted the recommendations of the Truman fact-finding boards in the present strikes. They have receded from their original demands for wage increases higher than those recommended by the "fact-finders."

The big capitalist corporations like General Motors and the steel companies have rejected the recommendations of their government that they give a very miserly wage increase. Thereupon Murray, Reuther and the others rush to the side of Truman to fight together with him against the capitalist employers.

That's what they think, these bureaucratic and stupid leaders of over a million workers on strike. They become righteous and indignant that U. S. Steel and GM refuse to abide by decisions of the government.

If they know, why don't they tell the million workers on strike and the whole labor movement exactly whose government it is? Furthermore, why don't these fat ten and

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1,650,000 Workers on Picket Lines

The main strike struggles, involving over 1,650,000 workers, are briefly summarized below:

STEEL:

Nearly 750,000 CIO steel workers shut down the overwhelming bulk of the steel industry on Monday, January 21, following the collapse of negotiations in which President Philip Murray of the USA-CIO had already compromised the union's demands from 25 cents an hour to 19.5 cents. President Truman's formula of 18.5 cents an hour was then accepted by the CIO, and turned down by the steel barons.

MEAT:

Over 263,000 packinghouse workers struck on January 16 following breakdown of negotiations when the big packers rejected the CIO's wage demand of 17.5 cents an hour. The meat trust offered a miserable 10 cents an hour.

ELECTRICAL:

More than 200,000 electrical industry workers closed the major corporations, Westinghouse, General Electric, and the electrical division of General Motors, in a fight to get 19.5 cents an hour.

AUTO:

UAW strike against General Motors, involving over 350,000 workers, went into its eighth week with the CIO returning to its original demands of a 30 per cent wage increase, after General Motors failed to meet a January 21 deadline in which to accept the recommendation of the Truman Fact-Finding Board to grant a 19.5 cents an hour wage increase.

New Jersey Picket Lines Stand Solid for Victory

HARRISON, N. J.—For the second time in two years, the 3,000 members of Worthington Pump Local 1833, United Steel Workers-CIO, are on the picket line.

Worthington Pump has a long record of anti-labor activities going as far back as the campaign to organize the plant. The company is notorious for its efforts to cheat the workers at every turn.

For example, the company has a policy of chopping off fractions of units from the time sheets wherever possible. These fractions when totaled up make a tidy sum for the corporation, all taken from the earnings of the workers. The corporation has also tried to

get the workers to accept a flat one hundred dollar bonus, instead of retroactive pay dating to May, 1944. This little device would mean that many workers would lose several hundred each. The workers in the plant have rejected this proposal.

The average take home pay in the shop is about 40 dollars. In some of the departments such as the Foundry, wages are as low as 75 cents an hour. The original USA-CIO demand for an increase of 25 cents an hour, was countered with a company offer of eight cents an hour.

The workers of Local 1833 are determined to remain on strike until the company agrees to decent working conditions and a decent working wage.

By ROBERT WEST

HARRISON, N. J., Jan. 21—Crucible Steel Co. workers at the Atha Works here wasted little time this morning in answering the national strike call which became effective at 12:01 this morning. Picket lines were formed immediately and strikers started on their first nationally authorized strike since the heyday of the SWOC organizational campaign during the rise of the CIO in 1937.

The history of the Harrison steel workers is best demonstrated by the long, hard, militant fight carried on by progressive rank and filers at the Atha plant. No record has been kept of the numerous wildcat strikes which took place in the years before the war and during the war itself. Militants were systematically com-

promised or drafted into the armed forces, but the struggle against the corporation continued without let-up.

Crucible workers were personally affected by the war. The Atha Works is a munitions plant. Shells for the Japanese government—the main source of revenue for the Atha Works—were used extensively for murdering Chinese workers during the rape of China and later against the sons and brothers of American workers.

This was a period of constant turmoil, eventually exploding in sit-downs and strikes; company provocation was always on the order of the day; the fight against the stagger system still continues; spies, stooges and finks have the run of the plant; grievances became entangled in the

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By ROBERT WEST

BLOOMFIELD, N. J., Jan. 19—Striking electrical workers at the Bloomfield plants of Westinghouse and General Electric continued their fight into the second week, today, grimly determined to see their rightful demands for security and a living wage through to the finish.

Jack Penworthy, a member of Local 410, UERMW, at the Westinghouse Plant where he has been employed for the past seven years, said when he was interviewed this morning: "I just couldn't get along on the salary I was making. How could I on \$31 per week take home pay? I've got a wife and a kid to support—and \$31 doesn't go very far these days—not with the high cost of food and clothing and shod-

dy clothing, at that. For instance," he continued, "today, I've gotta pay \$2.75 for a pair of overalls which I used to pay \$1.25 before the war. The company, however, isn't doing too bad. They made a lot of dough out of the war and now they're getting their tax cut-backs from the government. On top of that, the company has been unloading washing machines and refrigerators at a secret warehouse here in Bloomfield for the past three months in order to grab the tax cut-back and increase their profits."

Jacob Styzkowski, a buddy of Jack's, also works at the Westinghouse plant. He's been employed there for the past three years as a

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