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# Labor Views

NO. 14 - AUG. 17, 1946

REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS LEAGUE—CHICAGO

## NMU STRIKE PROVES NEED FOR MARITIME UNITY

POLICE ATTACK PICKET LINES  
STEELWORKER AND AFL MARITIME  
LEADERS REFUSE SUPPORT

Three thousand sailors on the Great Lakes, members of the National Maritime Union (NMU-CIO) have been faced with almost every possible obstacle to block a militant execution of their current strike to reduce their work week from 56 to 40 hours. Their membership is spread out thin on ships and in ports all across the lakes. Thus the few hundred NMU men in Chicago have had to try to picket all the industrial docks which jut out from the steel works in South Chicago from 79th Street south to Gary.

Against these thinly drawn picket lines every possible anti-worker force has been hurled. First there was the police - Let "Shorty", a merchant sailor tell his story:

"When I saw that club coming down I really thought I was going to get it."

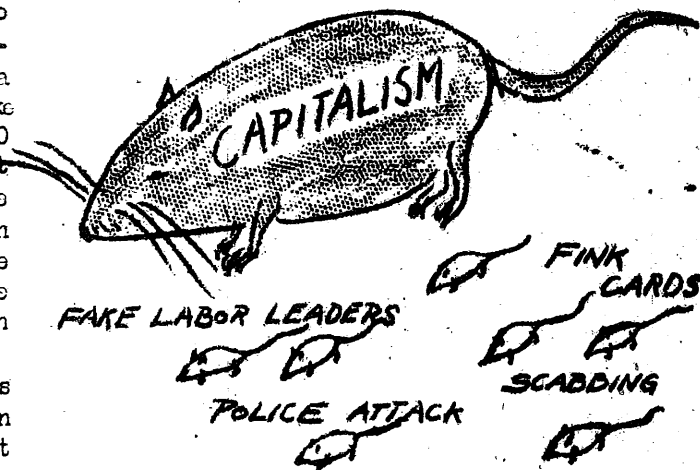
Shorty had been on his toes that day (Aug. 21st) as a couple of scabs tried to slip through the gates at the side of a passing car. As he made a run to stop them four policemen tumbled out of a squad car - coats off and clubs swinging. The pickets dodged and the clubs missed them, but the scabs got through.

"There were only us two pickets at the 88th Street gate (of Carnegie steel works) Shorty continued, "but there soon was two squads of plain clothes men, two cars of uniformed police and two company police to cover us." Other NMU men later verified the number of police. Police made sure that any attempt to re-enforce the picket line would be met with more police.

Shorty told his story as he stood examining picket cards of the men filing into a membership meeting at the NMU hall on 3339 Michigan Ave., Indiana Harbor, last Thursday (Aug. 22nd).

It was at this stormy 3 hour meeting that the NMU men in Chicago approved the Standard Oil compromise settlement for a 48 hour week at sea.

As the men came in from the picket



## A WARF RAT AND ITS BROOD

lines they had some comments to make.

"Two men at a gate is not enough!"

"These are only token picket lines. Scabs can ride right through in cars while the cops watch."

"How the hell can we get anything out of a strike like this? Ships still keep coming and going..."

During the meeting a steelworker from NMU's sister CIO union came up to the door and put it this way:

"Is the strike over? No! Well, how come yesterday I see a ship come in to our docks? It unloads and loads and at three o'clock this morning it pulls out. I think to myself the strike must be over." The strike wasn't over he was told.

"The crane operators are in my union - CIO", he continues, "We are all CIO union! Why do we work while you are on strike?"

"Only when we stand together can we win the strike! All this week I am wondering why don't we support them?"

A group of rank-and-file steel workers

# MARITIME MILITANCY SQUELCHED

BY NMU, SIU AND STEELWORKER UNION BUROCRACIES

## Sailors' Pay Raise a By-Product of Struggle among Fakers

The fact that a majority of Great Lake sailors are going to get a pay raise out of the currently ending strike led by the National Maritime Union (CIO) is the only heartening aspect of the story. For, it reflects the power of these workers to wring some concessions out of the modern money pirates in spite of terrible obstacles.

Actually, the sailors pay raise comes merely as a by-product of the maneuvers of union bureaucrats in their struggle for power. Beleaguered by such a union leadership and by vicious police attacks on their picket lines, sailors themselves have expressed their surprise to Labor Views that they got anything at all.

A complete picture of the current strike will show why.

NMU membership numbers about three thousand of the twenty-six thousand lake seamen. An estimated ten thousand belong to the Seafarers International Union (AFL) while the rest - about half of the total - are unorganized. These thousands of unorganized sailors are the union plum that these two union leaderships are struggling to pluck.

The chief purpose of the current NMU strike is to give the NMU leaders an edge over the SIU in the drive to harness these unorganized sailors to their respective bureaucracies.

What has the NMU strike won? The strike demand was for the reduction of the 56 hour to a 40 hour week, but the compromise settlement was 48 hours at sea and 44 in port. The net result for the NMU men is a pay raise ranging from about 37 to 42 dollars a month. Seamen are bound to work a seven day, 56 hour week to keep the ships running; but now, added to the basic rates of \$179 a month for apprentice seamen and \$123 for A.B.'s is eight hours of overtime pay every week.

This puts the pay of the NMU A.B. (able-bodied) seamen at about \$255 a month compared to the \$223 scale paid to regular A.B.'s in the SIU. But the lake shippers have taken immediate steps to deny the NMU this organizing weapon. The Lakes Carriers' Association which represents 53 companies running 316 of the roughly 400 ships on the lakes, has announced a new wage policy in line with the new NMU contracts. So all sailors

not up to this standard will get a raise.

Obviously, a unified strike by the thousands of sailors on the lakes need not have taken any 48 hour compromise. But the leadership of the SIU and the AFL longshoremen instructed their men not to enter NMU boats but to continue working on their own and on unorganized ships. Ryan, president of the AFL longshoremen, told his men (Aug. 21st) "If you refuse to load grain ships entering Buffalo Harbor, you are organizing for the NMU." The fact that the rank-and-file sailors would really like the pay raise involved in a 40 hour instead of a 56 hour week, doesn't even enter the labor skato's head.

But the sailors were denied yet another weapon of labor unity: the dock workers members in the United Steelworkers Union - a sister CIO union to the NMU. A few of the crane workers (about 100 of them) in this CIO union could almost completely tie up shipping on the lakes. Why did the steelworkers keep loading and unloading struck NMU - CIO ships?

Again, the answer is found in the struggle within the labor bureaucracy. The NMU is recognized as strongly under the control of the Communist Party (Stalinist). Any strengthening of the NMU means a strengthening of the Stalinist Bureaucrats as against the Phil Murray bureaucrats within the CIO.

Within both the AFL and the CIO those actions are in keeping with the drive to diminish the power of the Stalinists in the trade unions while the capitalist government in Washington attacks Russia on the diplomatic front.

Down along the water front and in union halls Labor Views found heartening evidence among both the AFL maritime workers and the CIO steelworkers of rank-and-file awakening to this heinous crime against workers - the deliberate division of them against themselves.

But this rank-and-file awakening has as yet no leadership. The NMU leadership has proven itself completely incapable of impelling the thousands of lake sailors into a mass action for their demands.

The fact that city police and company goons could crash scabs through a CIO sailors picket line without arousing a mass defence of those picket lines by

### NMU, SIU BUCROCRACY (from page 2)

the direct fruit of the black record of NMU leadership during the war. The NMU accepted a wage scale which was below that of AFL seamen.

To help the imperialist "war effort" NMU leadership approved the breaking of precedent that all sailors be hired from union halls. It approved the ignominious "fink" card - a seaman's work record which follows him everywhere. During the war this was replaced by a more efficient "seaman's papers" accompanied by a FBI identification system. Union militants are constantly in the spotlight of the union bureaucracy and the boss class government. Thus was the no-strike policy enforced.

NMU Stalinist leadership co-operated with the coast guard in the disciplining of merchant sailors. Now these same leaders whine that the coast guard is used as an open strike-breaking agent. Is it any wonder that such a leadership is but a wax dummy before the task of unified, militant mass action which workers need today?

Company dictatorship, government stooge-police, and union bureaucracies - maritime worker can clean these war rats from their ships and docks. They should drive toward the organization of an inter-union committee for maritime unity, including all maritime dock workers and shipyard workers, controlled by the rank-and-file.

### MARITIME UNITY NEED (from page 1)

had come into the NMU headquarters before the meeting to find out how they could support the strike.

NMU strike leaders in the hall told them to put pressure on their leadership. The CIO steelworkers union leaders have ignored such pressure throughout the strike. A Labor Views representative advised the steelworkers to organize their own rank-and-file support of the strike.

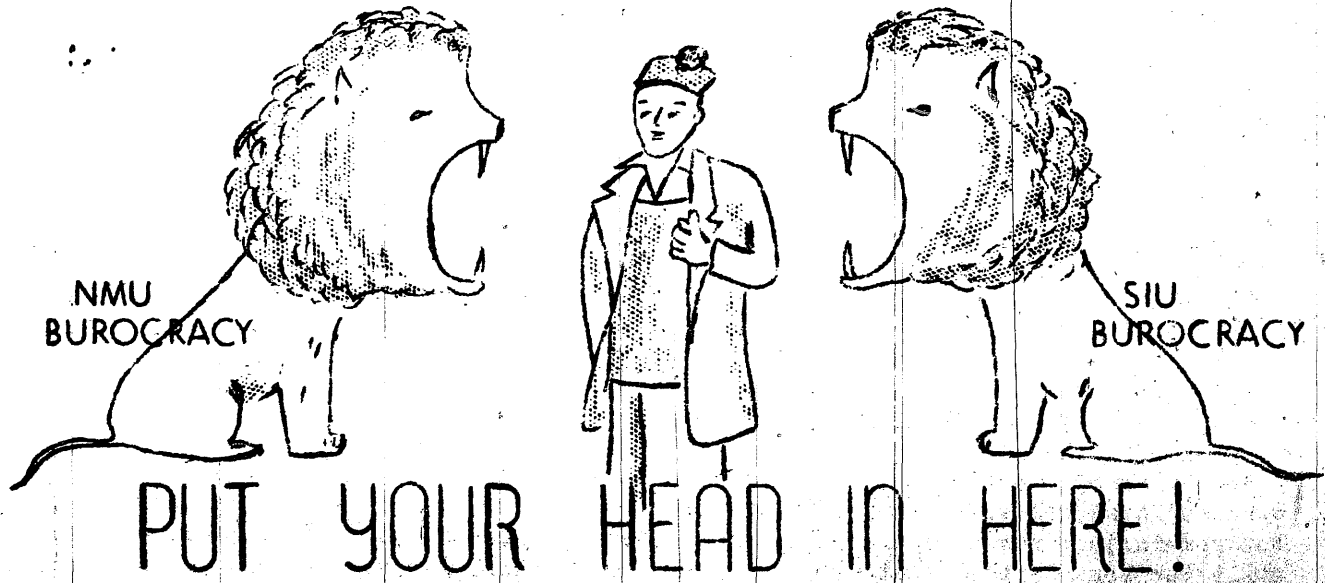
The local leadership of the Seafarers International Union carried on a constant campaign among their men not to support the strike. Yet Labor Views found a few SIU men on the picket lines.

Jansen, the business agent at the SIU headquarters on 24 W. Superior Street, had just finished saying,

"We know where every one of our men are. They're not supporting this strike!" when a young sailor walked in.

"I come off the Richard C. Stanley at the ore docks," he said, "Over half the crew walked off when we saw the strikers on the docks and we heard them shout, 'You're workin' overtime. Don't be a scab!' On the boat docked just ahead of us the whole crew walked off. Hell, I couldn't be a heel. I walked off too."

He reported three other ships similarly tied up in Two Harbors. Some workers have followed their militant instincts in this strike, but there has been no leadership to crystalize it into a real mass action by the maritime workers on the lakes.



# "WORKERS BUYING LESS FOOD," CRY FOOD DISTRIBUTORS

Two national groups of food merchandisers, began their meetings in Chicago Wednesday, August 21st by crying "OUCH!" to the decrease in sales caused by the over-rising food prices. The Independent Grocers' Alliance composed of 4,500 independent grocers grossing  $\frac{1}{2}$  billion a year gathered at the Morrison Hotel. The National Food Distributors Association representing 6,500 distributors operating 60,000 trucks gathered at the Hotel Sherman.

Said J. Frank Grimes, president of the IGA: "The savings of 40% of families have been wiped out and they are now living on current income. They cannot pay the present high prices for meat and many will have to go on two or three meatless days a week." He also predicted that high prices for grain, canned fruits and other food products will affect buying.

Said Porter Leach, Chairman of the NFD: "The housewife will buy for current needs rather than for the future." (meaning the ice box will be bare when the folks get through the evening meal.)

At the same time we have the report of Dun & Bradstreet Inc. that "the general level of wholesale food prices hit an all-time high in the week ended yesterday (August 20th)." Rye, coffee, beans, eggs, steer and sheep moved upward.

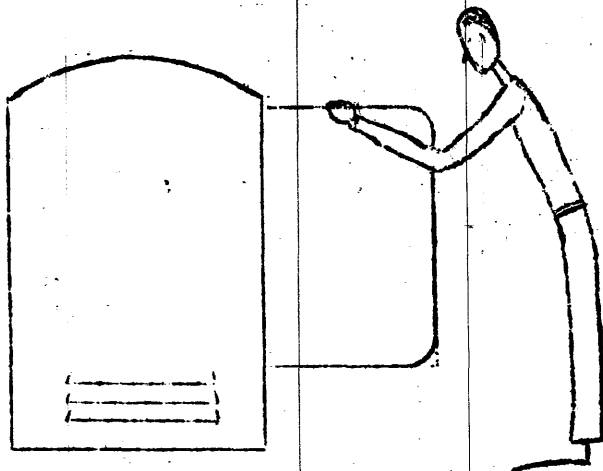
These organizations look at the problem of higher prices from the point of view of sales. But less sales of these necessities means less buying and less buying means only that the workers are eating less or eating inferior foods.

Listen! Listen to the patriotic hymn: "America":

"...amber waves of grain  
...across the fruited plain"

Considering what's happening to the workers' diet, these are apparently meant to remain just words of a song. This is still the land of the capitalist spree and the home of the proletarian slave.

CAN WE GET  
ANY THINNER?



"...the Ice Box Will  
Be Bare AT THE END  
OF THE EVENING MEAL"

**LABOR VIEWS** is issued by the Chicago Committee of the RWL to further the struggle of the working class against the constant attack of the industrialists and bankers.

We propose independent working-class action beginning at the shops, mines and mills against this ruling-class and its government - its police forces, its courts and laws - operating as its "big stick".

LABOR VIEWS recognizes that although today the working class fights to defend its living standards, tomorrow it will face the task of abolishing this rotting system of capitalist slavery, and create a government which will organize society for the welfare of all who labor. The chief instrument needed for achieving this goal is a Revolutionary Workers Party.

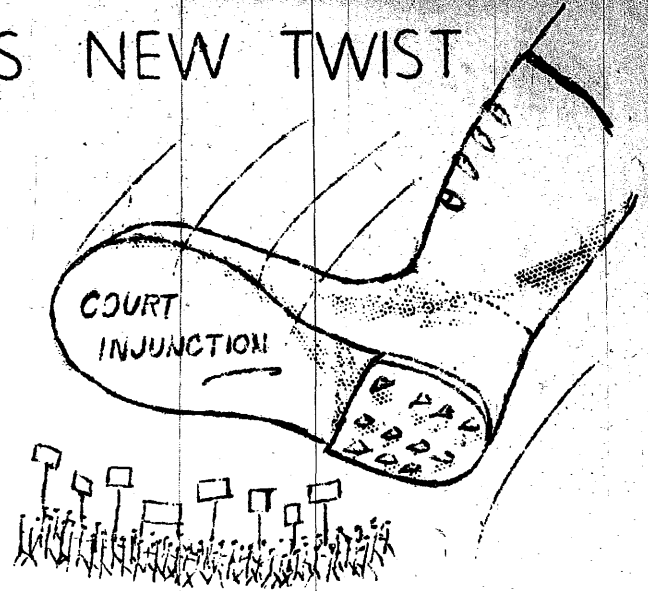
# JUDGE GRABER PUTS NEW TWIST ON OLD LINE

Workers of Local 1150 of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers, CIO, recently received the second half of a "one-two" punch from Chicago's courts. In answer to their notice served to the Cory Corp. (Manufacturers of coffee makers) that they were going to strike for an 18 1/2 cent wage increase Judge J. Graber of Superior Court on August 15th issued an injunction restraining them from striking.

(This is the same judge who set himself up as a one man censor over Spotlight, the official organ of the UR/ and DSE union at Montgomery Ward's - handing down an order that the paper cease printing "untruths.")

Of course, the first half of this one-two" punch - the one that set the workers up for the blow by Judge Graber - was delivered by the Local 1150's union leadership. This leadership has kept the local far overdue for wage increase under a contract which included a "no-strike" pledge on which the Judge based the injunction.

The Civil Liberties union tries to make much of the argument that Graber's arbitrary decision was "unfounded on legal precedent". This is only true in a limited, sense. Usually injunctions are declared to break up strikes once they are started. However a glance at a little labor history will assure most workers that the injunction is a time-honored legal device, along with force and violence for smashing labor struggles. In 1806 the Philadelphia shoemakers were charged with illegally assembling to "unjustly and corruptly conspire, combine, confederate and agree that none of them" should work for any master who would employ any person who would break the rules of boot and shoemakers. The judge in that case ruled that a "combination of workmen to raise their wages was an attempt to injure nonmembers" and that "the law condemns this". The shoe workers attempted to appeal to the public on the basis of an appeal to theoretical legal rights which were guaranteed (?) by the constitution but they found to their sorrow that the courts were rubber stamps for the boss. Result? The courts convicted the workers as "criminal conspirators". This procedure was the fore-

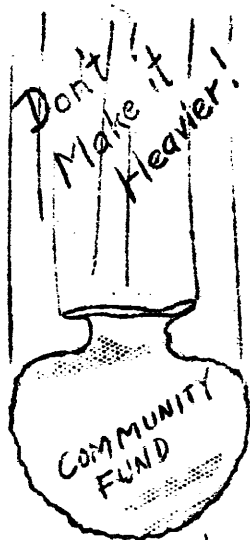


runner of the modern form of injunction.

First modern application of the injunction was issued in 1886 in Massachusetts against strikers of the English Spring-head spinning Co. The court enjoined the workers from "the act of displaying banners with devices to prevent persons (scabs) from continuing in the employment of the plaintiff". Infringement of these injunctions were met with imprisonment, fines and often both. The courts and judges openly and brazenly indicated by their legal decisions that they equated boss' interests with law, justice and all the other abstractions which capitalism observes more by violation than practice.

As the labor movement developed the injunction was used more and more for breaking strikes. The injunction as a strike-busting weapon came of age following the panic of 1873. The railroads being in the hands of receivers were administered by courts which unhesitatingly declared injunctions against strikes. From 1880 to 1895 the injunction became a regular and widespread practice. And in the process of busting strikes the employers stamped upon and spat upon every constitutional right established by the capitalist revolution of 1776. Thus he shows that the highest justice of capitalism is to sit upon the backs of his employee and coin profits out of his sweat. Judge Graber is acting true to the form established by all the other bourgeois legal polecats who carried on witch-hunts against organized labor as "criminal conspirators".

# 13 A.F.L. UNIONS REFUSE TO KICK-IN TO COMMUNITY FUND Y.M.C.A. using it to break strike



The strike of 13 AFL unions at the YMCA received unexpected help on Sunday August 18th when the Chicago Federation of Labor voted to boycott the so-called Community Fund so long as it was contributing \$220,000 to the "Y" each year.

The 13 unions have been on strike for approximately two months. Center of the union strength is in the "Y" laundry, which is overwhelmingly organized. The "Y", however, runs a number of hotels and other facilities. Hiding behind a cloak of being a religious institution it pays the lowest wages of any hotel or similar institution in the city.

During the strike the management of the "Y" has engaged in all kinds of strikebreaking activity, including showering the pickets with ink-wells, hot water, chairs and other assorted items. It has consistently refused to recognize the unions, even the YMCA on the coast has been organized for some time, and even though the YMCA - Women's Christian Association - has agreed to recognize the unions in Chicago a few weeks ago.

Sunday's AFL meeting was stormy throughout. The resolution to boycott the Community Fund had been introduced a month ago and referred to the Executive Committee. This group of labor skates and tools of the capitalist politicoes - led by Secretary Joe Keenan - just pigeon-holed the resolution. A fight had to be waged on the floor to force the resolution out of the Committee. Keenan and Victor Olander, secretary-treasurer of the Illinois Federation of Labor, asked for more time for the Executive Committee to handle the matter. Olander insisted that the workers continue to kick into the Fund but that they specify that none of the money go to the "Y". A delegate immediately pointed out that that wouldn't change anything because non-union employers would specify a larger portion of their contributions go to the "Y" to make up the difference.

"If the Community Fund wants our money" he said, "let them throw the 'Y' out."

One out and out reactionary element called for support to the "Y" strikebreakers on the ground that they were doing such "good things for the people".

The fight was led by Bill McPetridge, crony of Mayor Kelly, who is out to build some kind of "left" reputation, but it had the overwhelming support of the rank-and-file delegates.

Unfortunately the resolution did not go far enough. It rests on a wrong premise. Any country that can spend 400 billion dollars for capitalist war should be able to take care of a few million dollars for so-called charity, without forcing workers to kick in from their pitiable earnings. Most of the contributions to the Fund are forced out of the workers, when in reality the problem is one that should be solved by SOCIETY AS A WHOLE, just as unemployment, maternal, death and other necessary social benefits. Workers should boycott Community Funds all the time, not just when it is involved in open strikebreaking.

Boycott of the Fund now, however, will aid the strikers and that is most important. The strike has been moderately effective because the garbage collectors and teamsters have given it full support. Efforts to continue organization and to put out effective leaflets to the scabs and the public have been very meager and very poor. Unless this work is improved the basis will be laid for a "soft" deal behind the scenes. Involvement of the rank-and-file is the prime necessity - and that requires work amongst the rank-and-file.

