

SOLIDARITY

EASTERN ORGAN OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

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?? What About The "Check-Off" ??

The joint conference of the Association of Bituminous Operators of Western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana, with official representatives of the United Mine Workers of America, broke up last week without reaching an agreement. At the same time, the conference indicated, in one detail at least, that storm clouds are gathering over the head of the mine workers' organization. The detail in question concerns the "check-off," that well-known system by which the union dues and assessments are deducted monthly from the pay envelope of the miner and handed over to the treasurer of the union. At the Philadelphia conference, the operators from the four mentioned states, composing the association of soft coal mine owners, were a unit in insisting that the check-off be dispensed with. All efforts at compromise in this proposition were unavailing, and the conference adjourned without coming to a decision.

The excuse given by the operators for wanting to dispense with the check-off, was that their association was in danger of proceedings under the anti-trust law for "restraint of trade." In fact, so they stated, complaint had already been made by the West Virginia mine owners, who are not in the association, and proceedings were expected. By removing the check-off, the operators of Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio and Indiana, could not be accused by their West Virginia fellow operators, usually referred to as "competitors," of "helping finance the big strike which has suspended operations there" (in West Virginia). Granting that such is the mine owners' motive, it shows how ready the bosses are to protect one another against the Federal Government. For the Association of Bituminous Operators, have been accused of subsidizing the U. M. W. A. (through its officials) in our own interest and against that of soft coal owners of West Virginia and other districts, as well as those of the anthracite. Now we are accused of financing the long and bitter fought strike in the West Virginia field. We wish to deny the accusation by doing away with the check-off, thus throwing the miners on their own resources in their struggles with our competitors. So goes the argument of the mine owners.

The student, who has been watching the great "chess game" being played for years in the mining industry, will at once inquire, "What does all this mean?" Is there really nothing else behind this latest move of the mine owners? If so, what may it be? Under the check-off, the United Mine Workers have been enabled to count on a total membership of 125,000. It is estimated that only one-half of the total number of coal miners in the United States. Now one has been able to guess what proportion of this number could be induced to pay dues under a voluntary system. Some have been so bold to contend that the check-off costs the operators nothing. Membership would disappear, with the removal of the check-off. Others have made the proportion still greater. All are ready to admit that the union membership would be reduced with the abolition of the check-off. Add to this the uncertainty of income under a voluntary system in the country, the recent resolution requiring as to other possible considerations, understand why the union officials are so anxious to retain the check-off.

But why should the mine owners want to do away with it? If the worst comes to the worst, why not let the "government" abolish it for them? The check-off costs the operators nothing, and certainly has aided them immensely in controlling the U. M. W. officials, and in maintaining peace and harmony between miners and mine-owners. Why invite possible war, and the eventual solidarity of all miners against all operators, with the letting down of the bars of INDUSTRIAL CONTROL? The only answer we can find to these questions is the evident ferment taking place among the rank and file of the miners themselves. We have before us a good-sized book containing resolutions submitted by miners' locals in various districts in the country, to the recent convention of the U. M. W. A. in Indianapolis. They touch a variety of subjects; but many of them make the plea for greater solidarity and unity of action, and more than hint at the abolition of district contracts, as a means to the end. A growing sentiment for INDUSTRIAL SOLIDARITY is apparent from the above resolution. Moreover, at the miners' convention itself, this sentiment was in evidence among the delegates. Gompers was compelled to come from Washington to Indianapolis, to defend the action of the A. F. of L. in refusing an assessment for the striking miners at Calumet, in Colorado, in British Columbia. He admitted that he was practically ALONE in his defense, and beat a hasty retreat after making his little spiel. The A. F. of L. was openly denounced by different delegates, Duncan McDonald calling it "fossilized, worm-eaten and dead." A proposal for amalgamating the mining and miners' organizations was favorably considered. The fact that many of the dominating figures among these delegates have been regarded hitherto as tools of the operators under the contract system, indicates that considerable pressure is being exerted upon them to come below. The miners are stirring in the direction of solidarity.

What, then, should be the logical attitude of the mine owners? As always, they must seek to head off this growing spirit of solidarity among the rank and file. Hitherto, the check-off and all that goes with it, has been considered a most effective device to that end. It has kept the officials in line; prevented strikes disastrous to the operators; helped to keep alive hostility on the part

of many slaves towards such an organization. But in the light of the present situation, DO THE MINE OWNERS NOW SEE THAT IN THE EVENT OF THE CHECK-OFF THE MINERS ARE COMING TOGETHER? It is possible that the operators see themselves in the near future facing a united front of the nation's miners? Is the official wall no longer proof against the onslaughts of the industrial union idea? Hence the necessity on the part of the mine owners to keep the rank and file of the membership and financial resources of the union, and seeking by other means than those so long effectual, to keep the coal miners divided? The answer to these questions, which can only be forthcoming through the development of events, will be awaited with interest by every industrial unionist in the country and the world, for that matter.

Next to that of transportation, the control of the mining industry is the object of greater concern to the capitalist class. This revolutionary move at the I. W. W. REALLY united mine workers' union throughout the world has been recognized by our masters from the start. They have employed every trick and scheme and subterfuge in the great game they have been playing to prevent it. The same object must be attained in this latest proposal to abolish the check-off. The near future will tell.

What Is Wrong With The I. W. W.?

By E. W. Latchem, Kamlisop, B. C. BLOCKS WOULD ALLOW SOME THING THAT THEY DID NOT WANT TO BE SHOVED DOWN UPON THEM. If we continue trying to organize the workers with the present inconclusive and non-representative spending more time wrangling among ourselves, we will never get on as we have with workers. As long as we have affairs with power to set and control our own destinies, we will have no quarrels.

The only power any committee or executive body can have without causing friction is power to investigate and report on our movement, and to allow the members to take what they please. When the power to handle our affairs is delegated to a few it prevents the democratic members and puts them in the same relation to the G. E. B. that the capitalist class has to the union.

From these symptoms something must be radically wrong with the I. W. W. What we need is a new organization to be found out and the cause removed or the I. W. W. will be on the "back list."

We are organizing and teaching the working class that they are to learn to manage their own affairs and "free themselves," and not depend on the capitalist class.

When we get into the I. W. W. and try to put these ideas into practice, we find that we are not allowed to enter certain classes in the constitution, which says (A) that the General Executive Board shall have general supervision of the working class and watch vigilantly over the interests through its jurisdiction (B) that no Art. 3: "Any agreement entered into between the members of any local union shall be considered valid or binding until the same shall have the approval of the Executive Board of the Industrial Workers of the World."

Neither of the above clauses is in accord with any movement that has, or is trying to develop a "militant membership." The latter clause is only of use to a labor union that is the "private property" of its members. If a set of workers are satisfied with the terms offered by an employer, it is of no consequence to any outside parties. The curse of the existing trade unions is that they have no power to withdraw their hands from the officials, who come to regard the members as so much merchandise to be bought and sold for the benefit of the officials.

The power in the hands of the G. E. B. does not make itself felt until somebody tries to make the Board answer to the rank and file of the constitution. That was the case with the Industrial Worker. Trouble had arisen between members of the editorial staff, and wanting to settle the trouble, the G. E. B. called upon to do what they were given power to do. They took the action they thought necessary to settle the trouble, but only succeeded in adding fuel to the flames, and finished the job of putting the paper on the bum. There would have been no trouble if the G. E. B. had removed both men and put somebody else on the paper until the facts were put before the members for their decision, but instead the G. E. B. tried to settle matters by removing the men and putting somebody else in who was not in the least way agreeable to the members to whom they were not so alternative but to accept what the G. E. B. had done. The locals most concerned with their own and wanted to put them to use for the good of the movement, but the Executive Board as their own, especially when the Board wanted to make them swallow what they did not want. NOBODY BUT A BUNCH OF

Each subscriber will find a number opposite his name on the paper or wrapper enclosing SOLIDARITY. For instance 216. That means your sub. expired last week and you should renew at once. 216. THIS IS NUMBER

"Bottling Up" The "New Freedom"

Wall Street has been informed, according to reliable authority, that banks are better in the industrial situation need not be expected until after the congressional election of next November. It is the intention of the leading financiers and capitalists, so Wall Street is said to have notified, to be long and even accentuate, if necessary, the hard conditions of the order that the voters shall be forced to turn against Wilson and elect a Republican Congress on "property vs. hard times" campaign cry. With a Republican Congress, so Wall Street is said to have notified, his "New Freedom" will be "bottled up" in the Wilson program, legislative assistance and enactment; while the "money power" and the trusts will enter on a new period of profitable exploitation and "good times" all of which is interesting and borne out by innumerable indications, prominent among which is the vigorous denunciation of "Republican hard times" shouters and "cash-bowling" by the Democratic press; not to mention the thousand and one acts of speeches against Wilson by leading Democrats in public speeches and otherwise. A president without economic backing and non-representative of the dominant class interests, is like a trolley system without dynamo or electricity; it's there, but it doesn't go and can't get anywhere; so it comes around to the "money power" but where is he destined to arrive? And so we'll reiterate the same old story over and over again, while the "money power" and the trusts will follow, through the use of all the means at their disposal, to keep the "New Freedom" from being a success. When Mr. Workington and Mrs. Workington are in the house, we'll be a little plainer, if possible, at the next opportunity that comes around. Until then, redact on this awhile.

Dr. Eliot has again favored us with his views. He tells the present reform is not a success because it dislikes unions because "they seem to have a bad effect on the character of our members, when they make them believe that they are interested in the capitalist class. This makes common sense and conservatives of them. Only a revolutionary union gives its members character and happiness."

Lucien Sanial has written a pamphlet intended to show that the "banking power" will come in few years as a result of its misappropriation of capital for speculative purposes. Sanial makes out a strong and striking case in behalf of his theory, with much eloquence and statistics. Nevertheless we believe that his theory is wrong. The banking power has no means of appropriation and has only to reorganize itself.

When the policeman's club hit the head of the unemployed in Detroit, it not only broke a skull, but it shattered the delusion that Ford's "philanthropy had solved the social problem either there or anywhere else."

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THE LOS ANGELES PLAZA TRIAL

Again we have witnessed that same fatuous and pompous "His Poers," in the case of the forty-three persons brought to trial charged with the rioting that took place at the meeting of the unemployed at the Plaza Christmas afternoon...

revolver in his hand, the answers to the questions were "I don't know." "You mean to say you fired at a man at close range and did not know whether or not he was hit?"

He weal as Messrs. Solomon and Gaston in their ridiculous stories, "I don't know." "You mean to say you fired at a man at close range and did not know whether or not he was hit?"

exander Valencia, testifying to the alibi of Lino Ygnacio. She folded her arms over her ample handkerchiefs and did not deign to be judged from her plain statements.

LECTURES

To assist in educating the wage slaves, and as means of helping them to get SOLDIERSHIP and I. W. W. Publishing Bureau, we announce fellow workers

SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS can be held in any industrial town where good advertising cards can be relied upon. Write for a town.

ADVERTISING & LITERATURE We are advertising cards for the workers entering and leaving their place of work, and if possible a collection can be taken to cover deficit from tickets.

PRINTING Throwaway Cards, 3x1-2x5, printed on red card stock, 250,000, \$3.50 per 2,000. Address: I. W. W. Publishing Bureau, 112 E. W. Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Facts Wanted About Construction Camps A move is now under way to form the Idaho, Utah and Nevada, this coming spring.

"Emancipation" The attention of the readers of Solidarity is again called to the French branch of the I. W. W. We are not calling for monetary aid; but we do want the local unions who have members who read French, to subscribe.

Send in \$3.00 for three yearly subscriptions and secure a copy of "The Trial of a New Society" free.

THE \$1,000 FUND

Total to Feb. 17, \$242.80
I. W. Hildebrand 1.00
Nestor Donoghio 5.00
Castro Villalobos 1.00
John Gibson 1.00
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J. Lohor 1.00
Local 145, I. W. W. 5.00
F. L. Rhoda .50
Joe Gersher 1.00
Ed. Rowan 1.00
John Thomas 1.00
Wm. Subr 1.00

Total to Feb. 24, \$268.00
Des. Moines, Iowa, is a good field for I. W. W. organization, and this spring there will be a good opportunity for all foot loose rebels.

Those in charge of publicity in connection with defense cases, free speech, strikes, and other events in the I. W. W. world, should not fail to send weekly reports of what is doing.

While courts of justice in various sections of the country are grinding out severe sentences against I. W. W. members and sympathizers, it is well to keep in mind always that behind the court is the boss.

Remember The Sample Copy Fund. I. W. W. PREAMBLE

The writing calling the employing class into action is common. There can be no peace so long as the earth and the air are filled with the working people who are being kept in a state of slavery.

These conditions can be changed and the latest of the working class should only by organization formed in such a way that it shall be able to defend itself against the attacks of the ruling class.

Subscription price is 60 cents a year. Bundle orders 2 cents a copy. Make out money orders and checks to "Emancipation, Box 206, Olympia, W. A. I."

An Omaha fellow worker offers to be one of one thousand to secure five new readers to Solidarity. Let us hear from the other 999.

The Trial of a New Society

By Justus Ebert
In this book Fellow-Worker Ebert gives the best exposition of the constructive and social philosophy of the I. W. W. that has yet appeared in print.

The New Unionism

By Andre Tridon
"A clear statement of the philosophy and practice of Syndicalism, its history and present status all over the world."

The Revolutionary I. W. W.

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A new pamphlet. Shows both destructive and constructive programs. Just what you have been looking for.

The I. W. W.

By Vincent St. John
Its History, Structure and Methods. New and enlarged edition. Sells like hot cakes at street and hall meetings.

Mr. Block

By Ernest Hudson
A pamphlet consisting of 24 Mr. Block cartoons which appeared in the Industrial Worker. Try them on some of your Block neighbors.

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