

Sigman's Cossacks

BY JOSEPH ZACK

IN New York we have in the police force an institution called the Industrial Squad. This is supposed to preserve "law and order" in industrial disputes and has the uniformed police to help it when needed.

Many workers may not know that the underworld, that part of the population composed of gangsters, thieves, murderers, etc., has anything to do with strikes, employers' associations and anti-labor law enforcement and even with control of unions. But this is the outfit that plays a very important role in all strike-breaking combinations, and the Industrial Squad fits into this like a head into a body.

"Democracy", a Hidden White Terror

The law permits picketing, permits organizing, but just try to do it and you'll find pickets arrested under all kinds of excuses, restrictions imposed, pickets clubbed and even gassed. Injunctions or no injunctions, law or no law, the employers in control of local, state or federal government find a way to do it brutally and thoroughly enough. Often they dispense with formalities.

When a strike looms, the employers' associations' legal department gets in touch with certain detective agencies and the police. The detective agencies have that underworld forces mobilized and the police stand by to aid the gangsters in the job of terrorizing the workers.

The Gang's All Here!

The Industrial Squad: Big strappy fellows with murky, animal faces, some of them former union officials, shady characters, sluggers, police. They know the underworld, the gangsters that sometimes work for the unions' side, the "Frenchies", "Little Augies", "Jack Noys", et al.

Lately this gang was amalgamated with another parcel of cut-throats called the "Bomb Squad". Both squads are post-war innovations, the "Bomb Squad" was created for harassing the political labor movement.

The Industrial Squad employs a lawyer who handles their "business" and there is surely plenty of graft. Here is how it works: The Squad has its ears to the ground for any strike or organization drive. If the bosses are wise, an adequate financial contribution will do a great deal toward getting "proper service". An instance from last Summer's Interborough Rapid Transit strike can be given.

Slugging Strikers

One bright day as the strikers, many of whom are good fighters, Irish, were leaving their hall, they were bounced upon by the sluggers of the traction company led by the Industrial Squad. Strikers were black-jacked right and left, kicked and stabbed and one carried away with a broken skull. Uniformed police stood by, ready to use their clubs in case the striking motormen should get the upper hand.

Suppose the Industrial Squad had not existed? The company sluggers, if they had dared make a job like this, would not have such nicely arranged police protection and leadership. The strikers might have put up a good fight and badly organized police might have arrested the real offenders. Many things might have happened wrongly. But as it was, it was well organized.

The Industrial Squad has a free hand against pickets. It sees that the union's special committees carry no weapons, while the bosses' gangsters are free to carry guns, knives, black-jacks, etc. If any unionist is arrested for putting up a fight, savage sentences are handed them, as in the Rosalski cases, while the bosses' gunmen escape and even if caught red-handed, a

formal arrest is made and the gunman gets out with little trouble.

Sigman's Only Backbone

The reader may wonder what all this has to do with Sigman, the reactionary president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, but all should know that this whole machinery is solid with Sigman in his fight against the left wing in the union. Sigman is actively using the "law", the underworld and the employers' associations against the union's Joint Board. We should remember that the Industrial Squad was created during the post-war open-shop drive to fight the unions. But since the only unions who now put up a fight against employers for the workers are those led by the left wing, the Industrial Squad seems to be specially fitted for Sigman's dirty work.

A Fascist Job

It has gone so far in the present struggle between the rights and lefts in the needle trades that, if a worker is discharged for opposition to Sigman, a scab takes his place. If the scab is taken down to the union office (left wing) during work hours by pickets, Sigman merely calls up the Industrial Squad, the detectives rush up to the Joint Board offices, take the scab down and reinstate him in the shop just as if they were Sigman's business agents.

If there are any pickets in front of that shop the next day, they run the risk of being beaten up by Sigman's gangsters under supervision of the Industrial Squad. Thus does Sigman, a supposed "Socialist", use the tools of the enemies of labor against militant local unions that challenge his rule. It is the logical outcome of a degenerated trade union bureaucracy. The bosses take advantage and workers are being discharged, overtime is not

paid for, workers are speeded up and the situation is much the same as if there were no agreement.

Trying to Destroy Unionism

Sigman, of course, uses the Industrial Squad and the underworld not to maintain unionism but to destroy it. He gets help for delivering these workers to their class enemies; it is the employers and Tammany Hall who will be masters of the needle trades unions if Sigman and Matthew Wolf win. But that is a long, long way to go. The workers can not be brow-beaten for long.

Injunctions, gangsters and Industrial Squads will not be able to impose Sigman's leadership on these needle workers, and before this fight is finished there will be a defeat not only for Sigman, but we will be much nearer to a powerful Labor Party in New York City that will make it possible to uproot Industrial Squads, injunctions and all these practices with which the labor bureaucracy in co-operation with the gangsters' attempts to control the trade unions of New York.

Elections in the I. A. of M.

THE machinists Progressive Group has issued a statement calling for the support of the following candidates in the approaching elections for International officials of the I. A. of M.:

For Executive Council, United States, Peter Jensen, Lodge 492, Chicago.

For Executive Council, United States, A. T. McNamara, Lodge 1341, Baltimore.

For Executive Council, Canada, J. McGovern, Lodge 111, Montreal.

For A. F. of L. Delegates, J. Weydert, Lodge 390, Chicago.

For A. F. of L. Delegates, Wm. Waterworth, Lodge 113, Chicago.

For Law Committee, Jacob Friedrich, Lodge 66, Milwaukee.

The program of the Progressive Group in the election is as follows:

- 1) A general wage increase of wages in the entire industry, on the railroads by restoration of the 1920 wage scale.
- 2) Immediate organization campaign to organize the unorganized based upon a united drive of all the crafts both on the railroads and in the machine shops generally, the union to pay more attention to the unskilled and semi-skilled specialists and also take the initiative to organize the auto industry.
- 3) Amalgamation of all the craft unions in the metal industry.
- 4) Militant struggle against company unions and the B. & O. plan, Watson-Parker Law and other forms of class collaboration.
- 5) Removal of racial bars on account of race, color, etc.
- 6) Freedom of political expression in the union.
- 7) Bi-annual conventions.
- 8) Militant struggle against injunctions by the union supporting and participating in the movement for a labor party.

The statement analyzes the situation in the union and the various groups. It points out the bankruptcy of the Wharton administration, and its complete surrender to the bosses by the adoption of the B. & O. plan, its support of the Watson-Parker Law, its utter failure to organize the unorganized, its failure to carry out the I. A. of M.'s policy on amalgamation, and its general attack upon the progressive forces who insist upon a militant policy in dealing with the employers.

According to the statement the former Anderson group has practically disappeared and the Chicago section of this group, led by Fry, has joined the administration in its war against the left wing and progressive forces. Anderson and Hannah and the rest of the leaders in the last election have been practically deserted by the Chicago leaders and are running as independent candidates. The Progressive Group has made all attempts to get a statement of policy from these two, and also to unite all the opposition forces together on a definite program, but this has not succeeded.

The constitution of the I. A. of M. provides that a vote must be cast for six members of the Executive Council from the United States and one from Canada, or the ballot will be voided. The Progressive Group makes no recommendation for the other three from the U. S.

SHINGLE WEAVERS WIN STRIKE

Hoquiam, Wash.—The strike of shingle mill workers in this district has been won, the companies agreeing to take its employees back without discrimination at the rates of pay prevailing before the announced cut. Two thousand workers will go back to work.

The winning of the strike is a tribute to the fine spirit of solidarity of the workers. They were out for six weeks and previous to that had suffered a two months' lay-off. They had no strike fund and were just beginning to secure contributions from a few unions when their point was conceded.

Out of the struggle the International Union of Shingle Weavers with a membership of several hundred has been born. The men made no demand for the recognition of the union. It is expected that this will be one of the measures for action soon.

As a factor in the winning of the strike the newly organized Labor Unity Conference of trades unionists of Seattle is deserving of mention. Members of this group went to the strike zone at their own expense and assisted as speakers and advisers and with publicity.

A. F. of L. Did Nothing

The State Federation of Labor did absolutely nothing. William Short, president, and other officials made no attempt to connect with the strikers and the struggle was barely mentioned in the official paper. C. O. Young, the official organizer for the American Federation of Labor for this section, addressed a mass meeting in the beginning of the strike and counseled against the formation of a union until the men had been taken back.

The strikers preferred the advice of a Labor Unity progressive, and organized. It has not been decided whether or not the new union shall affiliate with the A. F. of L., the I. W. O. or remain independent. Many of the members have held cards in either of the first two organizations.

WHY NOT OTHERS?

THE membership of the International Brotherhood of Steam Shovel and Dredgers' union have voted by four to one to amalgamate with the International Union of Steam and Operating Engineers, thus ending a ten-year-old jurisdictional dispute.

The agreement to amalgamate was signed by both unions. We would like to know why other craft unions weakened beyond measure by division when fighting the bosses, and defeating each other systematically in jurisdictional disputes, do not amalgamate.