

Hillman's Theory and Practice in The Amalgamated Clothing Workers Means That Tailors Earn An Average of \$21 per Week and Home Workers Earn Between \$9 and \$13 per Week.

Amalgamated Efficiency Unionism

Blessing for the Bosses--Misfortune for the Workers

By LOUIS HYMAN

Manager New York Joint Board Cloak and Dressmakers' Union

IN THE Jewish Trade Union Movement, Sidney Hillman, President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, was the first to preach and put into practise the "Green-Woll" brand of unionism. Not only the employers of the needle industry, but employers everywhere call Hillman the best, the most capable and the cleverest union leader.

As for the liberal intellectuals, they never cease singing hymns of praise at the very mention of Hillman's name. It is often recounted how Hillman built the mighty Amalgamated, with a bank in New York and another in Chicago, built million dollar apartment houses also. The logical conclusion drawn is that Hillman's achievements prove the theory of class struggle fallacious, and all talk about workers wresting improvements through class struggle not worth a continental.

CAN A UNION PLEASE A BOSS

This brings to the forefront the question, how can matters be so arranged as to both satisfy the hunger of the wolf and at the same time save the sheep? We will let Hillman explain this great mystery.

In "The Advance" of June 29, 1927, there appeared an article of Hillman's entitled, "The Clothing Industry and the Amalgamated". In that article Hillman demonstrates that the percentage of bankruptcies amongst non-union firms is greater than that amongst union firms, because of the tactics of the Amalgamated, which were deliberately planned and executed. Hillman further states:

"We know more about the process of production than does the individual employer and in many instances the Union, through its experts, has indicated the mistakes made in the process of production and the way to improve such process. We have co-operated with the manufacturers to bring out such clothing as is demanded in the market; especially during the

past few years when there were continuous changes in the industry, the most important of which was the demand for cheap clothing. A great many manufacturers have made changes in their production in harmony with the new demands. Lower prices in clothing can result either from lower wages of the workers or changes in the method of production. And in this matter the Union can be of great aid by insisting that the lowered prices of garments shall only come about through a change in the method of production and not through lowered union standards. In some emergency cases we have even helped employers financially. We have helped them overcome the crisis and retain their business. The policy of our organization, as already stated above, was to co-operate with the employers in lowering the production cost without lowering the union standards."

NOT LOANING TO TAILORS

In considering the policy of the Amalgamated, as stated by Hillman himself, we will not take into account sentiments and will not ask the question whether it is consistent with trade union traditions to help employers financially.

The Amalgamated has a bank and to whom shall this bank lend money except to bosses who must pay bills? Surely, it is not to be expected that the bank would lend money to the tailors to pay rent? This would be contrary to the state banking laws, since the tailors cannot make use of Hillman's "efficiency" unionism as collateral to guarantee their loans; as for other collateral, it is not at their disposal.

Hillman's statement that the brand of unionism practiced in the Amalgamated is a blessing for the bosses is amply corroborated by official statistics which show that the profits of the men's clothing manufacturers have increased tremendously in recent years. According to statistics just printed by the United States Commerce Department there were, in 1914, some 4,830 men's clothing firms. Their gross profits amounted to \$141,351. This makes an average earning of \$29,265 per firm. In 1925 the num-

ber of firms was reduced to 4,000 and their gross profits had risen to \$325,920,000. This makes an average of \$81,480 per firm. In order to get an idea of how tremendous the profits of the clothing manufacturers are, one must also bear in mind that among the 4,000 firms there are 1,545 contracting shops and naturally the contractors did not make a profit of \$81,480 per year. If we were to figure only on inside manufacturers, therefore, the average profit would be much greater.

WHAT ABOUT THE WORKERS?

But after all, unions are created not only for the purpose of aiding employers but incidentally they must also do something for the workers. When we investigate the conditions of the workers we find that there are no miracles in this world. Hillman's magic explains itself and we learn how it is possible for production to be carried on at lower costs in union shops than in non-union. The magic wand is called "efficiency". What "efficiency" means for the bosses we have learned from the above. However, for the workers we find that "efficiency" means shorter seasons, unemployment, the speed-up system and starvation wages.

In the same organ of the Amalgamated "The Advance", of December 9th, 1927, Dr. Herman Frank in an article entitled "The American Men's Clothing Industry in Figures", shows that in 1923 all men's clothing establishments employed 174,332. This means that in the course of the two years, between 1923 and 1925, more than 20,000 workers have been thrown out of the shops; though the number of workers has been reduced; nevertheless the seasons grew shorter. Dr. Frank takes his statistics from the report of the Federal Department of Commerce. The year 1925 was a good year, a year of prosperity for the clothing manufacturers. This is seen from the large profits made as shown by the above mentioned figures. What then are the reasons for the facts as given by Dr. Frank? His article does not attempt to explain them.

RANK AND FILE WORRIED

Such explanation, however, can be found in "The Advance" of June 29th, 1927, the same issue in which Hillman's article, quoted above, appeared. There we find a report of a meeting of Local 2 of the Amalgamated which speaks of a discussion that took place on the much aggravated problem of labor saving machinery. It is a constantly growing evil and is becoming

more menacing from day to day, the report says. Machines are replacing hand workers more and more and there is less and less place for the workers in the industry. The report further states:

"The Executive Board of Local 2, together with the officials of the Joint Board conferred and worked out a resolution to cope with this problem. There is a certain part of a coat that must remain the work of the baster though basting machines are otherwise used. The officials, the business agents and trade managers have undertaken to enforce these regulations in the shops."

How do Hillman's tactics of co-operating with the bosses by installing the highest form of "efficiency" tally with this action of Local 2? How does this tally with Hillman's tactics of enabling union manufacturers to compete with non-union firms? Is it in line with Hillman's efficiency theory to force the bosses to employ basters when edges of coats can be basted by machine at a lower cost of production? Whose policy is correct? Whose tactics are in the interest of the workers? Whose tactics should be put into effect, Hillman's or the Joint Board's? And how can "The Advance" at one and the same time praise Hillman and also praise Hollander, who undertakes to see that no basting machines are installed?

"EFFICIENCY," NO CONSISTENCY

Consistency is not among Hillman's virtues. In the shops one cannot practice "efficiency" and cooperation with the bosses and at the same time prohibit the installation of labor-saving basting machines. Of course, theoretical inconsistencies disappear when it comes down to actual facts. In the shop Hillman's policy of the speed-up system and higher standard of production is put into effect, with the result that thousands of workers are thrown out of the shops and reduced to virtual starvation. Since the joint Board cannot give jobs to the workers, it at least adopts resolutions not to permit the use of basting machines. The bosses are not in the least alarmed by these resolutions. On the contrary, the more such resolutions are made the more easily will the workers be fooled.

Dr. Frank's article is full of figures. One can note how many inside shops there are, how many contractors, the prices of suits and coats, etc. But as to the earnings of the workers look once more into the report of the United States Commerce Department, where we discovered

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facts that are not to be found in "The Advance" and which they had evidently forgotten to state. We learn that the 174,332 workers who were employed in the men's clothing industry in 1925 received wages amounting to \$203,847,000. This means an average of \$1,168 a year per worker, or \$21 per week.

Well, it seems that the "efficiency" bunk and apartment unionism did not bring the millennium for the workers. One cannot even live meagrely on \$21 per week.

In order to complete the picture of the situation in the Amalgamated we will also acquaint you with the fact that in the men's clothing industry the evil of home work still flourishing. Not only did the Union fail to do away with this evil, but on the contrary, according to the report of the State Department of Labor, Bulletin 1477, of August 1926, the number of home workers in the men's clothing industry has increased. The investigation of the State Department of Labor has established that there are in New York about five thousand home workers and their earnings are from \$9 to \$13 per week. The report further states that when the home worker earns from \$9 to 13 per week it is not certain whether these are the earnings of one

person or more. It is also impossible to establish the number of working hours. In most instances those who take out work are women. When these women bring the work to their homes it very often happens that the mother together with the children do the work. In the books of the employer the name of only one person is recorded, but in reality a number of people worked for this \$9 to \$13 per week. There is no limit as to the hours; whole nights are spent working.

When we examine these facts the miracle disappears and the puzzle is solved. When Hillmans and Greens proclaim that thru the installation of "efficiency" the workers have shorter hours and higher wages, and that at the same time the production cost is not increased, they forget that this same "Efficiency" means not only a reduction of the number of workers and more unemployment, but also hard work and the speed-up system for those who remain in the shops; a speed-up system which can only be kept up with by the younger and stronger workers. Not only is this true in the Amalgamated but all over. Ask the workers and they will tell you what "Efficiency" means.

A F E D E R A L A N T I - S T R I K E L A W

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is in line with this whole development. Its purpose is to demobilize the workers and to render them helpless in the face of capitalist exploitation.

"The labor officials supporting this monstrous legislative program are nothing more or less than agents of the capitalist class in its open shop drive against the workers. They are surrendering the workers' right to organize and strike. Their action is part and parcel with their general policy of co-operation with the employers. With the unions being smashed on many fronts, these misleaders refuse to amalgamate the unions, to organize the unorganized, to build a Labor Party, to develop a counter-offensive against the employers. On the contrary, they work hand in glove with the employers to speed up production, they sabotage every struggle of the workers, and they terrorize every element in the working class that demands indispensable fighting policy. They are the tools of American imperialism at home as well as abroad. Meanwhile, the trade union movement goes into the ditch.

"The trade unions, confronted with an industrial depression and an army of over three

million unemployed, are in a deep crisis. Their very life is threatened by the attacks being delivered against them by the employers and by the absolute refusal of the union leaders to mobilize the workers to resist these attacks by a counter offensive. The proposed anti-strike laws are the climax of a long process of systematic surrender of the workers into the hands of the employers. It is the latest blow at the weakened union movement.

"The great masses of workers must rally and defeat this latest assault by the employers and their lieutenants, the trade union leaders.

"Unorganized, as well as organized workers, must protest and demonstrate aggressively against this crowning act of treachery by the labor bureaucracy. Every union and shop throughout the country should protest against it. The masses can and will defeat this effort to shackle the working class in slavery to the capitalists.

"Workers! Defeat the proposed legislation! Free yourselves from the treacherous leaders who are co-operating with the employers in the formulation of this law! Defend your living standards, your labor organizations, and your right to strike!"