

Steel Workers Eager for Unionization; W. Z. Foster Urges Drive Be Intensified

By Louis F. Budenz

Steel workers are more eager for unionization today than ever before in the history of the industry, William Z. Foster stated yesterday in a special interview with the Daily Worker.

An intensification of the present organization drive in the steel regions can lead to a great mass enrollment in the union within the next few weeks, he declared with the vigor which made his leadership of the 1919 steel drive a red letter event in the annals of American labor.

The leader of the 1919 steel campaign and present national chairman of the Communist Party has just returned from a brief trip to

Communist Leader of Great 1919 Strike, Back From Tour of Steel Area, Tells in Interview of Workers' Militancy

Chicago, scene of the great fight for steel unionization which he began nearly 20 years ago. There he met many steel workers and got an up-to-the-moment insight into the present campaign. On the trip back to New York, he stopped off at Pittsburgh for a day or two, to look further into the steel situation.

THEY WANT THE UNION

"How did the present scene compare with 1919?" Foster was asked. "Did it remind you of the old fight?

What are your outstanding impressions?"

He got to the heart of the matter immediately.

"My outstanding impression," he declared, emphatically, "is of the strong urge for organization among the mass of the workers. They give signs of this deep desire for unionization on every side. To every meeting and demonstration which has been called, they have responded enthusiastically and in large numbers. The steel mills are

seething with sentiment for organization."

"The prestige of the Committee for Industrial Organization and of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee," he added, "is high among the workers. It seems to grow from day to day."

"This spirit of unionization is not shown by the steel workers alone," he continued. "Workers in all kinds of other industries in the steel regions are stimulated by the organization campaign. They want the union. Never in my experience have I seen such a ripeness for organization."

"The company unions have been

(Continued on Page 2)

Page 2

Steel Workers Eager For Unionization

Communist Leader of Great 1919 Strike, Back
From Tour of Steel Area, Tells in
Interview of Workers' Militancy

(Continued from Page 1)

showing some aggressiveness lately, according to the press and the organs of Big Business," the interviewer said. "What of them? What role are the company unions really playing?"

"These institutions were launched by the Steel Trust to stop the 1919 drive," he replied. "They did not stop it. Nor will the company unions, in my opinion, be a successful instrument for stopping the present campaign. As to the present activities of company union representatives: The steel workers are seizing upon such frail contacts as the company unions afford for resistance against the steel companies. These institutions, formed for the specific purpose of combatting real unionism, are turning out to be instruments for the advancement of trade unionism.

"Judge Gary was right," Foster smilingly continued, "when he stated after the 1919 strike that 'company unions are no real protection against the organization of trade unions.' The then executive of the Steel Trust had learned that much.

MUST SPEED DRIVE

"Of course, revolt of the workers through the company unions will not of itself automatically bring about the building of the union. The secret of using the company unions for the building of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers lies in the trade union organizing forces raising their own organized demands in the name of the union and in carrying through a militant recruiting campaign. In that way, the union can maintain the initiative in the industry. Thereby, also, all concessions which are made must redound to the credit of the union.

"The only danger that can arise, in my opinion, from the activities within the company unions could come from slowness in the organization campaign. That would tend to weaken the prestige of the unions and to create illusions that the company unions are sufficient.

"With a militant campaign of organization," he declared, with emphasis, "the trade union forces can win the overwhelming section of the company unions to real unionism."

MEN ARE READY

"Big Business organs have been trying to make out lately that the company union demands for higher wages and the like arose independently of the C. I. O. campaign. Is this correct? Are the company unions cooperating with the C. I. O.?"

"As the leaders of the steel drive have stated in the press, the organizing forces are definitely encouraging the company unions to make their demands," was his reply. "The militancy of the company unions in this respect is directly connected with the steel union drive and its continuance depends directly on the intensification of the drive in the steel industry."

"What is the immediate need in regard to the campaign?" was the next question. "What, in your opinion, is now to be done?"

"In my judgment, the whole stage in the steel industry is now set for a big intensification of the organization drive," he declared. "The men are ready. The organizers are in the field, conditions are ripe. In the next few weeks—with greater intensification all along the line—we should see great numbers enrolled in the union. The present gradual growth of the union in the various districts can and would be transformed into a tremendous mass drive."

FOR ROOSEVELT

"Roosevelt's address at Forbes Field in Pittsburgh and the other speeches scheduled for old party

candidates in that region show that the capitalist parties are concerned about the steel workers' vote," was the next subject referred to. "What is the sentiment of the steel workers on the election? Who will they vote for?"

"From what I have seen and heard," Foster said, "the steel workers are almost unanimously for Roosevelt. In fact, many of them have too much confidence in Roosevelt. There are some even who think that the success of the present organizing drive depends on whether or not Roosevelt is elected. In my judgment, this is a basic mistake. The whole experience in the steel industry goes to show that if the workers are to be organized, they must rely upon themselves, and not upon any capitalist politicians."

BETTER SITUATION THAN '19

"Considering all the factors in the situation—if the drive is speed up, as it can be—it is clear that by the time that the election takes place, the steel campaign should be far enough advanced to have a sufficiently large body of union men so that it can be carried on safely to success even should Landon be elected."

Foster was most serious on this point. "It would be the height of folly to make the campaign dependent on the election of Roosevelt."

As the interview concluded, Foster referred again to the impressions with which the interview had opened: "... Never have I seen the steel workers so eager for unionization."

In the steel regions in 1936 greater possibilities than even in 1919 confront the American trade union movement for the organization of huge masses of workers, not only in steel but various other mass production industries.

Protests Grow On CIO Issue

(Continued from Page 1)

ers Union stated emphatically: "This suspension by the executive council is a blow to the unity of American organized labor and will bring harm to the masses of wage earners everywhere."

Armstrong Council Central Labor Union of Kittanning, Pa., was outspokenly in favor of the C.I.O. with a resolution:

"The hope of this body is the continuance of the C.I.O. until every unorganized worker in America becomes a member of a union."

Among others which took a similar position are:

Hamilton, Ontario, Trades and Labor Council.

San Francisco Local of the United Association of Plumbers and Steam Fitters.

OTHER UNIONS ACT

Los Angeles Local 15 of the Upholsterers' International Union.

Stanislaus County Central Labor Council, at Modesto, Cal.

New York Locals 2163, 787, 290 and 1164 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners.

Worcester, Mass., Central Labor Union.

Los Angeles Local 840 of the Pharmacists Union.

Orgeon City, Ore., Local 68, Green Bay, Wis., Local 65 and New York Local 107 of the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers.

West Concord, N. H., Branch 32 of the Quarry Workers International Union.

Salt Lake City, Utah, Local 377 and Cumberland, Md., Local 314 of the Journeymen Barbers International Union.

Menominee, Mich., Federal Labor Union No. 18501 of the A. F. of L.