

Meyer Perlstein, the Mussolini of the Yellow Bureaucracy, Smashes the Union

By BEN GITLOW

The war in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union against the Trade Union Educational League was inaugurated in real earnest in the city of Chicago. The director of the fight against the League there is Vice-President Meyer Perlstein.

This gentleman was sent to Chicago by the International as organizer of the Western district. Just now his main activities consist in expelling good active union members from the organization.

Perlstein, under orders from the General Executive Board of the International, started the fight against the Trade Union Educational League by preferring charges against two of the most active delegates to the Joint Board of the Cloakmakers' Union.

A committee was elected by the Joint Board to investigate the charges against these two members. The investigation committee consisted of six members, each representing one of the six locals that comprise the Joint Board.

During the investigation Vice-President Perlstein acted as the accuser, the prosecutor and the Judge. He did everything in his power to induce the investigation committee to bring in a report unfavorable to the League and to the two delegates of the Joint Board involved. Nothing however helped him. The investigation committee, which was truly a rank and file committee, refused to be coerced and brought in a decision upon the facts presented at the hearings. The committee by a vote of five to one declared that the Trade Union Educational League was not a dual organization, and that members of the International were perfectly within their rights when they adhered to the League.

Needless to say that Perlstein, the agent of the reactionary machine in control of the International, was not satisfied with the decision. By hook or crook he would have his pound of flesh. When the committee's report came up before the Joint Board for approval, Perlstein made a bitter and vicious attack against it. He threatened the delegates present with suspension from the union if they would dare to vote in favor of the committee's report. Perlstein, an old hand at the game of expelling progressive members from the organization, took no chances. He did not rely entirely upon his bulldozing. He immediately, without any precedent, made a ruling that the seven members of the Joint Board whom he knew to be sympathetic to the League, were not entitled to a vote on the matter. The committee's report was finally rejected by the Joint Board in the following manner: 11 delegates supported Perlstein's motion to reject the report, 8 voted against, 7 were denied the opportunity of voting and seven refrained from voting because they were afraid that Perlstein would carry out his threat. The committee's report was actually rejected by a minority of the delegates present because only 11 out of the 33 delegates present voted to reject.

This gave Perlstein the opportunity to declare the Trade Union Educational League a dual organization and to expel two of the finest union men in the Cloakmakers' Union of Chicago. Perlstein may not know how to organize the industry but he knows how to checkmate the militants. Before a decision of the Joint Board becomes effective it must be submitted to the locals for approval. This Perlstein knew would give the rank and file an opportunity to condemn the disruptive tactics of Perlstein and to prevent the expulsion of its rank and file leaders. So Perlstein ruled that the decision of the Joint Board goes into effect immediately and is not a matter to be considered by the locals.

Perlstein then rushed into print. He got in touch with the capitalist press and the Jewish Daily Forward. In the Jewish Daily Forward the only reason given for the expulsion was the reason that the Trade Union Educational League was a dual organization. In the Forward it would be bad policy to give other than constitutional reasons. In the capitalist press this great union leader showed his true colors. He paraded as the champion of the country and the American Labor movement. The League, he declared, was not only a dual organization but also a red revolutionary organization. It was friendly to the Communists and was under orders of the Communist International. The capitalist press of Chicago congratulated him. They thanked him for his services to American institutions. They com-

plimented him for his audacity and heroism. They pointed out that he acted against the "reds," while Gompers and the rest of the leaders in the American labor movement only talked. They called upon all the leaders in the unions to follow Perlstein's tactics in order to drive the pernicious reds out of labor organizations.

However, Perlstein did not figure on the militancy and revolutionary spirit that dominates the members of the International. The rank and file did not accept his position as final. They rebelled against his brazen, high-handed, disruptive methods. Shop meetings passed resolutions of protest. The wave of indignation rose. Perlstein had to use an iron hand or be doomed. Local 104 refused to bow to his ukase. Perlstein expelled Local 104. The seven members left on the Joint Board who belonged to the League continued the fight for the rank and file. So he expelled them. But the rank and file still rebelled. They printed leaflets. They talked among themselves. They refused to remain quiet. So Perlstein decided to do the Mussolini stunt. He had orders passed, that no leaflets could be distributed at local meetings or in the union offices where the workers congregate. He issued an order that any member who dared to discuss anything but trade questions would be suspended from the organization. Even on the streets of Chicago he ruled that the workers could not do these things. To prove to the rank and file that he meant to carry these orders out he had a committee of ten appointed who would in devious ways enforce the edicts of the almighty chief.

The rank and file who are prepared to fight capitalism will not be scared by a trade union buffoon. The rank and file in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union all over the country will take up this fight. The Perlsteins belong to the camp of the enemies of the workers because they do the dirty work of the bosses in breaking up the unions. In Chicago at the present time the workers are fighting a desperate fight against the bosses and their allies, the capitalistic courts. Thru injunctions the bosses hope to smash the union. When Perlstein should be fighting the bosses he is fighting the rank and file.

The Coal Strike Outlook

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"general expenses" only afford the owners another avenue of pocketing millions of dollars annually.

Besides assuming that the Operators are telling the truth about the price in coal rising \$2 per ton if the miners get their wage increase there is a leak in their figures somewhere. The Operators say this raise will saddle an additional burden of \$90,000,000 on their poor coal-consuming public. Now, the number of tons of anthracite used in the Eastern Territory annually is 85,000,000. On this basis there would be at total rise of \$170,000,000 in the cost of coal. Thus, even assuming that the Operators are telling the truth for a change, they would be pocketing a net sum of \$80,000,000 on the wage raise. Needless to say the Operators have been making a lot of noise about the public paying more for coal but they have not mentioned a word in all their propaganda about this huge sum of four-score millions that they would pocket by their own increasing the price. The Operators have conveniently omitted telling the public by whom they always swear in case of a strike that the \$2 a ton increase in the price of coal would be only that much additional tribute paid to the Coal Barons by the anthracite consumers.