

# Building Trades Bosses Plan Use of Apprentices as a Tool to Kill Organized Labor Control in Trade

By MAX SHACHTMAN.

CHICAGO. The increasing attention being paid to the instruction and control of apprentices by the employers in the building trades is held here to denote a new phase of the attempts of the big building contractors to weaken the strength of the building trades unions by having a supply of trained workers who will be turned out by apprenticeship schools maintained and controlled by the bosses.

E. L. Bowman, educational director of the National Trade Extension Bureau, Plumbing and Heating Industries, declares that "the present condition, if carried far enough, will bring wages of plumbers to such a high point that the public will cease to buy standard plumbing, and will either dispense with it or will buy the cheap goods furnished by the mail order houses and will have them installed by a common pipefitter without the advantages of sanitary skill."

Neither Mr. Bowman nor the employers he represents care one snap about the "public" but are only interested in keeping down the wages of the workers so that the profits may be increased. That they are going about this in organized, mass fashion can be seen from the plan drawn up for the educational director of the bosses. The director is charged with the instruction and training of the apprentices all over the country. The plan contemplates three months pre-employment training in the public vocational schools before the apprentices are put to work. During the second and third years, the apprentice is obliged to attend public evening school not less than 100 hours a year. It is understood that a very capable craftsman can be turned out in that course of time, one who will be able to be placed in competition with the organized trades unionists in that industry.

The Association Tile Manufacturers also have a national apprentice system in effect and it is estimated that hundreds have been taken into the trade in the last year. The brick manufacturers and mason contractors are now sponsoring a nationwide bricklaying training plan under the leadership of a national director.

Reports from scores of cities indicate that there is a widespread effort to provide training for young workers who are to enter the building crafts.

In New York, Miss Mary K. Coleman, executive secretary of the New York building congress apprenticeship commission, reports that the board of education is co-operating with them to the utmost and has set aside \$20,000 for the current fiscal year to be used for teachers' salaries. "Working boys, who are forced out of school, are enabled to round out their education and at the same time are paid by the employer during the first year of their apprenticeship one-half the hourly rate for the number of hours spent in the school. The program is a sound, practical one and there is no doubt that it will be successful."

Reports of the industrial relations committee of the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce and experiences in Chicago and San Francisco with apprentices show the number of apprentices far exceeds the capacity to train them. It is significant that both in Chicago and San Francisco the building trades unions are being split and broken by the contractors. In Chicago by the Landis' award and in the coast city by the activities of the open shippers of the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association.

The situation in the building trades is typical of all the other industries in which young workers are being employed more and more. The organized workers must take into consideration the growth of the youth factor in their industrial life and

act according to the best interests of their organizations and of themselves and the young workers who are being used as the lever for the dislodging of union control on the job.

The Young Workers League, of America is calling upon the young workers to enter the trade unions in their industries in order that they may fight by the side of the adult workers for better conditions of work and for union control. The league, which is an organization of young workers whose purpose is to get the youth into the fight of the workers against the boss, also calls upon the organized workers to make an organized drive to get the youth into the trade unions and to admit them on equal terms with lower initiation fees in accord with their ability to pay.

The program of the league provides for a solution of the dangers presented in the typical example of the present building trades situation. It stands for a two years apprenticeship, including the probation period; for strict supervision of apprenticeship by working class organizations such as the labor unions or shop councils, and for shop vocational training for all young workers up to the age of 18, the setting up of apprentice departments in all places of work, the departments to be controlled by the labor unions with full wages to be paid the young workers at union rate of wages.

The danger of the young workers being used as scabs against the organized labor unionists of this country is ever present and grows from day to day. The workers must awaken to this danger to the existence of the conditions for which they have organized and fought for years and accept the program of the Young Workers League, which is not only to the interest of the youthful workers of this country, but for the adults as well.

## British Young Communists Secure German Red's Release

LONDON.—The immediate payment of a 170,000,000 German marks fine for Paul Steinbach, German young communist, by the Young Communist League of Great Britain, secured his release from the British military prison at Cologne, to which he had been sent for anti-militarist propaganda among the British soldiers.

This splendid example of international solidarity received the deepest appreciation of Comrade Steinbach in a letter addressed to his English comrades. He describes the triumphal return from Cologne and of how he was met and cheered at every station on the way, the news of his release having spread by means of a wire, which he sent to the branches in the Solingen district.

## Is the Government

By HARR