

Class Struggle in America

AMERICAN LABOR STRUGGLES. *By Samuel Yellin.* Harcourt, Brace, New York. \$3.50.

THIS book is especially recommended to the attention of William Green, of Matthew Woll, of Louis Waldman, of all those in the labor movement who like to talk of the development of the American labor movement, of the class struggle, as one proud, peaceful love-feast symbolized by the National Civic Federation. For Mr. Yellin tells the true story of American labor's upward climb and it is a story of bloodshed and violence, of heroic resistance to oppression, of unexampled bravery and self-sacrifice; it shows a capitalist class whose brutality, unscrupulousness and greed have seldom been equaled. The picture the author paints (and his facts are beyond challenge) of a militant working class on the one hand and on the other of a brutal capitalist class resisting with every weapon at its command every progressive step certainly does not dovetail with the utopias of a peaceful surrender to Socialism.

The wave of industrial expansion which swept the country, particularly the Middle West, after the Civil War, and which soon produced the panic of 1877 also unleashed class struggles of unprecedented fury. Mr. Yellin describes the outstanding of these, beginning with the railway strikes of 1877, during which the workers practically seized control of several cities, including Pittsburgh. He then deals with the Chicago struggle, the Haymarket case and the fight for the 8-hour day; the Homestead strike, in which the Pinkertons rose to national notoriety as professional killers; the American Railway Union strike of 1894, led by E. V. Debs, which became one of the mainsprings for the American Socialist movement; the anthracite strike of 1902, which saw the firm entrenchment of the United Mine Workers; the Lawrence strike of 1912, the peak of the activities of the I.W.W. and a splendid demonstration of labor solidarity; the Colorado miners' struggle in 1913; the great steel strike in 1919; the first great drive to organize steel and the first great demonstration of the unsuitability of craft unionism for mass production industries.

The last two chapters are devoted to recent labor struggles—the Southern textile strikes, covering Elizabeton, Gastonia, Marion and strikes of lesser prominence; and the recent strike of Longshoremen on the West Coast which led to the San Francisco general strike.

Without attempting any basic analysis or interpretation, Mr. Yellin has done an excellent job of presenting these ten epic struggles in a thorough, objective yet sympathetic manner.

HERBERT ZAM