

20 YEARS OF THE CIO -- First of a Series

By Art Preis

This year American labor celebrates the 20th anniversary of the CIO -- the Congress of Industrial Organizations. A new generation has grown up since the CIO's birth on Nov. 9, 1935. Young workers now in their twenties, who join a union as a matter of course, remember dimly, if at all, when there was no CIO. Yet, the rise of the CIO was, without doubt, the greatest event in modern American history.

emerge full-blown from the heads of a few of the more aggressive AFL leaders like John L. Lewis, the CIO's founding president. Its origin goes back to the earliest struggles of modern American labor. The vision of industrial unionism -- combining all workers of an industry regardless of craft, skill, race, color, national origin, religion or politics -- was one of the great inspirations of the pioneer American unionists and, especially, the socialists.

The heroic past of the CIO, the titanic events that brought it forth, are dimmed not only by time. The capitalist propagandists and the union leaders themselves have deliberately tried to bury and hide the true nature and significance of the CIO's history. It has been surrounded with falsifications, distortions and myths.

But the immediate origin of the CIO dates to the fateful year 1929 -- to the beginning of the great depression and war era that continues to this very day. There are some big differences between the America of 1929 and 1955 -- and the CIO played a major part in producing them.

The "Golden Twenties" and Today

In the "golden Twenties," workers in the mass production industries -- steel, auto, rubber, textiles, oil, chemicals, etc. -- were organized and atomized. They had no rights -- no means of self-defense from even the most brutal aggressions of the employers. They were fired at will, speeded up to a killing pace, worked for 10 and 12 hours a day straight-time at wages dictated by the bosses.



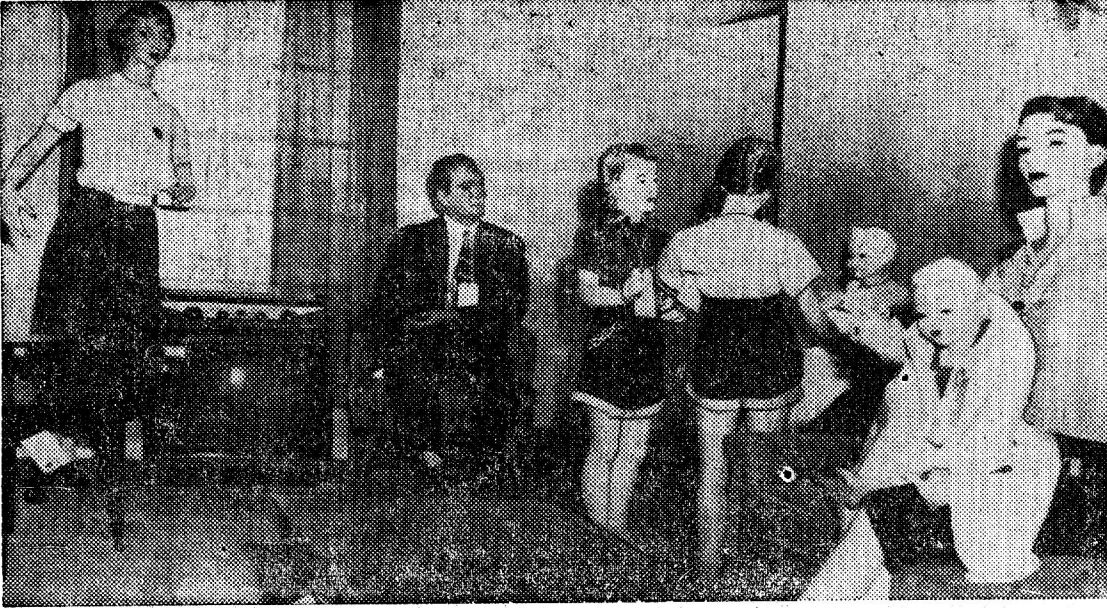
has gone ahead with startling success," he boasted. Even "the wage earners of the South have awakened to the necessity of organization." He found that "collective bargaining is coming to be accepted more and more as a preventive of labor disputes" and bragged that strikes had been reduced from 3,789 in 1916 to 629 in 1928.

the very year of America's entry into World War II, blasted every claim of William Green, although he never admitted it to his dying day. On Sept. 1, 1929, Green did not so much as mention unemployment or even hint at the possibility of depression.

After the first shock of the economic crisis the unemployed began to organize. The leadership of this movement was first in the hands of the Communist Party. It pursued, at that time, an adventurist, sectarian policy that in the end disorganized its own movement.

On March 7, 1932, a demonstration of unemployed seeking jobs at the Ford River Rouge plant was dispersed by machine-guns, with four dead and many wounded. Then, in July, came the savage attack on the unemployed World War I veterans who had come to Washington to seek payment on their bonuses.

Don't Be Dummies Like These



These dummies -- representing a "typical American family" -- await extinction by atomic explosion in living room of target house built for destruction in current A-bomb tests in Nevada.

The difference between the two periods is shown markedly in the scope and character of strikes. A few hundred or a few thousand strikers in the Twenties evoked screaming headlines in the capitalist press. Almost all picket lines were crushed with bloody violence by police, deputies, troops and armed professional strikebreakers.

The Economic Storm Strikes

The declaration in The Militant emphasized: "The main reservoir of labor militancy is in the masses of unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the unorganized, basic industries. The full horror of the capitalist rationalization falls directly on them, and the attacks of the capitalists in the present depression and coming crises strike them first and hardest."

Unemployment rose almost continuously to its peak in March 1933, with estimates of the jobless ranging from 13,800,000 (National Industrial Conference Board) to 17,920,000 (National Research League).

AFL Do-Nothing Role in Crisis

What did the labor leaders, headed by Green, do on the matter of unemployment? J. B. S. Hardman, editor of Advance, organ of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, in a 1934 symposium in a book called "Challenge to the New Deal," summarized the AFL leadership's attitude:

policy (this had always been his policy anyway) if the employers would pledge not to cut wages. A "gentlemen's agreement" was made. The only "gentlemen" turned out to be the AFL leaders. In June and July, 1930, 60 corporations and industries announced wage cuts. The AFL did nothing.

Money Lords Feud for Atomic Energy Control

Before the Second World War, the standing of the top ruling factions in American finance capital, was as follows: Morgan first, with \$30 billion; Kuhn, Loeb & Co. ranking second with \$11 billion; Rockefeller, third, with \$6 1/2 billion; Mellons fourth, with more than \$3 1/2 billion, and the du Ponts last with \$2 2/3 billions.

The du Ponts, it must not be forgotten, are the chief stockholders in the General Motors Corp., the largest single industrial unit in the world, as well as the beneficiary of the most lucrative cost-plus, fixed-fee contracts from the government.

Energy contractors, du Pont ranks first. It is the chief beneficiary of the new law which made America's atomic energy facilities wide open to exploitation by the private monopolies.

significance in the relation of the du Ponts to the other cliques. Naturally, it is difficult to state what share the du Ponts have carved out as against the other principal contractors, prime among whom are General Electric, Phillips Petroleum, Westinghouse Electric, and Union Carbide and Carbon.

do it because it had over 1,000 projects working simultaneously in different stages of development, and spread over 13 departments, staffed by more than 2,000 scientists and technicians.

tations, however, are imposed on the corporation, is an unequivocal sign, not only of the caution and uncertainty involved in the situation, but also a portentous sign of the extreme instability in the economic situation in the U.S.

... Southern Strikers Defy Thugs and Cops

At this plant the sympathy strikers stationed pickets and found members of other unions, such as the railroaders, only too willing to strike. Passes obtained by company officials for the railroaders were honored neither by the pickets or the railroaders.

at unsegregated strike meetings. This AFL Hotel and Restaurant Workers strike is receiving aid from the New York locals. It could be the spearhead of a drive to organize the 20,000 hotel workers in this city of wealthy vacationers and underpaid workers.

South wage differential begin melting away. American [Sugar Company] was tempted to do the same, but wisely thought better of it.

These money interests are trying to 'stick their finger in the dike' and save the Old South which they used to own lock, stock and barrel. They liked it when all workers in the South, both Negro and white, had to work long hours, live on corn bread and sow belly, and pretend to like it.

GENERAL DYNAMICS This brings us to a consideration of one of the companies which has been in the headlines -- General Dynamics, the concern which last year launched the first atomic-powered submarine, the Nautilus, and is now engaged on a new one, the Sea Wolf.

THE MILITANT ARMY

"Rush more Militants!" This is the message we're getting from Militant sub-getters all over the country.



cause, by sending to you for one of your papers, I know that I will get all the true facts of it."

Book - A - Month Plan May Selection Two Friends of Man By Ralph Korngold Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips and the Abolitionist Movement

At the Mansfield steel plant an impromptu rally was staged by steelworkers who had come to collect their pay. A wash tub was put before the gate for donations to the phone workers and money -- including \$20 bills -- rained into it.

