

Paving the Way for Class Collaboration

By ARNE SWABECK.

In their reckless destruction of the effectiveness and fighting ability of the union the officials of District 5, United Mine Workers, are now attempting to expel all militant members from the organization and thus prevent any further exposure of their mismanagement and spurious pretense of opposition to the efforts of the coal operators to enforce the 1917 scale.

Viewed together with the attacks made upon members duly elected to certain offices within District 12, Illinois, who have declared themselves as Communists, it becomes clear that a well-planned and centralized drive has been launched to eliminate the real fighters from the organization and pave the way for the policy of collaboration with the operators.

On April 21, James Oates, president of Local 4546, was ordered expelled from the union by District 5 executive board after having been notified to appear to answer to charges placed against him. On May 4 Tom Ray, member of Local 2012, appeared, upon summons, before the board. He refused to answer to any charges or concede the officials the right to place him on trial. That the board will assume the same arrogant position as taken towards Oates and also order the expulsion of Tom Ray is not the least in doubt as both are well known militants leading the progressive movement of the district.

The excuse furnished to cover this high handed action is based on a motion carried at a packed district convention held in March, 1924. This motion threatened expulsion of any member participating in any kind of a conference not sanctioned by the official family. One such conference was held March 15 to consider means of relief for the Moundsville prison-

ers. However, this relief work is a story which has become an integral part of the miners' progressive movement of district 5, the details of which are briefly as follows.

Growing out of the Cliftonville march during the strike 1922, when several hundred Pennsylvania miners crossed the border to West Virginia to urge complete solidarity of their fellow workers, 43 men were sent to prison. When brought to trial, five pleaded not guilty and were given heavy sentences. Upon advise of the district officials with intimations of early release, the rest of the men, when later brought to trial, pleaded guilty and were given sentences from three to five years. They soon found they were left in the lurch, no real efforts were made by the officials to secure the early release. But a vigorous rank and file movement sweeping the locals finally opened the jail doors for 26 of these men.

The militant miners have repeatedly exposed the base hypocrisy and the miserable role played by the whole official family in its betrayals of the heroic efforts of the rank and file workers to establish complete solidarity during the 1922 strike. They have exposed the deals made and the swelling of the bank accounts of those board members placed in trusteeship of relief funds for the coke region miners. They have exposed the corruptness of the district office in handling relief funds to the miners who were out in the crucible strike. Accounts of funds distributed were padded from \$20.00 to \$40.00 a week per family. Local Union 4546, of Charleroi, Pa., on Feb. 22, 1925, at a special meeting to which delegates of other locals as well as the district officials were invited to attend, made these charges public. This meeting decided to call the conference held in Pittsburgh, Pa., March 15 and the district officials were again invited to

be present, but failed to appear at either meeting.

While about 50 delegates representing almost as many local unions attended that conference the officials had meanwhile got busy circularizing the district with dire threats of expulsion of all who should decide to participate. The old motion passed at the eleventh hour at the packed convention a year ago, branding this and all such meetings as "dual" and slating for expulsion not only those who participate, but also those who give aid in any way, was dug up for the purpose.

The conference went ahead with its work planned to circularize petitions for the pardon of the Moundsville prisoners, to gather funds for relief of their families and elected a publicity committee to further this work. It also went on record urging that the local unions themselves take action on the charges, publicly made, of misappropriation of funds by the district convention to bring impeachment proceedings. This demand is now growing in volume as the resolution passes from local to local.

Charges were preferred in local 4546 against James Oates for having attended the conference. After the man who presented the charges had been compelled to admit that they were framed by the district officials the local refused to even consider the matter. Likewise in the case of Tom Ray whose local vindicated him of the charges made. Both locals had thus decided and in both instances their decisions were appealed to the district board. Very soon the board showed its hands in flagrant defiance of the constitution of the organization. It did not take the matter up for adjustment with the locals, the decision of which had been appealed, but ordered these two members to appear before its meetings to take action against them individually. They hoped

to get rid of two militant opponents who had always made it a point to rally the rank and file membership for the building and strengthening of the organization and for a fight against any encroachments of the operators. Naturally the both locals refused to become the tools of any such dirty dealings and refuse to carry out the dictates made in violation of their constitution.

While P. T. Fagan and the other lackeys of John L. Lewis are uniting their cunning abilities to fight those who give life to the union and make it an easy prey for the operators, union mines are being closed down and the miners constantly swell the ranks of the unemployed army. The Pittsburgh Coal company alone, in one month, closed 22 of its mines. What do the union officials propose to do for these unemployed miners? There is no sign of any move. As long as the bureaucrats have enough in the treasuries to keep up their fat salaries they have no personal worries and don't give a hang for the rank and file miners. If times get real bad they will turn to the operators for their reward or perhaps begin looking around for a soft birth in a so-called labor bank or labor union insurance company.

So while John L. Lewis is carrying on a counterfeit campaign of organization in northern West Virginia where mines are being closed down while the southern part of that state and eastern Kentucky are rapidly being developed as the coal mining center of the nation on the one hundred per cent American plan, with low wages, long hours and armed company guards his lieutenants are busy pulling the props from under. The terrific destruction wrought can be mended only by sweeping them all out of office and establishing a militant leadership with a policy of fight against the exploiters.