

Militancy of Illinois Miners Is Rising

By ARNE SWABECK.

Five months ago when the District 12 temporary agreement was signed jointly by the officials of the mine workers' union and the coal operators, the "Illinois Miner," official organ of the Lewis-Fishwick machine, heralded the dawn of a new day. The Illinois coal miners were pictured as marching to the sweet tunes of the mine whistle armed with a full dinner pail. Work was to start up again. Prosperity was to enter all the little shacks which the coal miners call homes.

Results of Betrayal.

It turned out differently. Only a few days' work each pay day. The grocery bills could not be paid. Many men found their wages garnisheered. Starvation stalked the field. The Illinois miners found that this temporary agreement, including the loading machine contracts, spelled the loss of all the conditions gained through hard struggles of the past.

The Illinois miners were taken out of the fight. Their Pennsylvania and Ohio brothers were left to battle alone. It pleased the operators, they had everything to gain. They could concentrate all their forces on smashing the union in Pennsylvania and Ohio and later the turn would come to Illinois. The union officials had done splendid service to the operators and were able to pocket their Judas' share.

Illinois Now Militant.

Again the Illinois miners are marching. They are fast becoming disillusioned from the "prosperity" pictures. The betrayal through this district temporary agreement is now clearly recognized. Their faces show

determination. They are getting set for the fight.

The miners are marching from the camp to the nearest town. There is going to be a meeting in the biggest hall, called by the Save the Union Committee. Maybe when they arrive the hall will be closed to them. It is the work of some of the machine henchmen. But it does not matter, the miners march on to get a hall in the next town. Their meeting will be held, nothing can stop it.

The miners are marching to the left. They now follow the lead of the Save the Union committee. It is a great movement sweeping the coal field. There is hope in that movement.

Before this movement began in Illinois most of the miners were thinking in terms of accepting a wage cut. The operators demanded it. The union officials, true to their role of traitors, propagated the acceptance of the wage cut. Nobody had any other solution to offer. There seemed no other way out. Now this has all changed. Every coal miner now speaks of how to prevent any and all separate agreements how to join most effectively in the national strike for a national settlement. The Save the Union Committee has shown the way.

Fight On In Springfield.

Going down toward the southern part of the state one will find Springfield the first important mining center. Here are fourteen mines of which only nine were working prior to April 1st. Those working, the men complained, were terribly overcrowded. Doubling up everywhere, cutting down the earnings of the miners. One miner told me he had drawn \$18 for five days' work.

Here the coal is shot out of solid

rock with veins of clay spread in between, making it difficult to load clean coal. If as much as a handful of clay appears with the coal on the surface the miner is docked, the first time 50 cents, the second time \$1, the third time \$2, repeated again it becomes cause for a lay-off. The company decides and the man has no show.

In Springfield is located the headquarters of District No. 12. The machine, as the staff of officials is called, has spacious offices in the miners' building, but the rank and file miners don't go near it. The Save-the-Union issue has drawn a sharp dividing line. It is the thousands of rank and file coal miners versus the operators with the machine desperately trying to put over the operators' policies as exemplified in the separate agreements.

Some Deserters.

The machine is worried at the rapid, tremendous growth of the Save the Union movement. Several of the machine men once posed as progressives; now they cannot even hang on the fence but are compelled to take their stand. They all joined with the reaction. There is Gus Fritz, board member, once posing as a progressive now hanging on to the job with the rest of the machine. There is Allan Heywood, board member, once posing as a progressive, and elected as such, now defending the Lewis policies. Joe Loda, board member, also tried once to pose as a progressive. He never knew much about anything. Recently he lead the gang in the slugging attack upon Joe Angelo, the secretary of the Save the Union Committee, in Springfield streets. Hindmarsh, the sub district president, once posed quite successfully as a

progressive. Now he goes all the way down the line with the district machine. Thus objectively he supports the Lewis policies as well as the corrupt Governor Small republican political machine.

Miners Closing Ranks.

The Springfield miners are closing their ranks in the Save the Union movement. The machine fought it tooth and nail, even bringing in policemen to one local union meeting to keep the progressives down. The rank and file elected fourteen delegates to go to the great Pittsburgh national conference but there were no finances available. When the time drew near for the delegates' departure, something had to be done, and it was done. The miners were poor and starving, yet the active members went out to the miners going from house to house and in one day \$257 was collected. Everybody did their bit and the delegates went to Pittsburgh.

Militancy in Taylorville.

This used to be a progressive sub district. Brophy received an overwhelming number of votes against Lewis in the last election. Yet with the scarcity of available organizers it was difficult for the Save the Union committee to give the favorable sentiment in this sub district organized expression. That is until Fred Bode, a local coal miner, took things in hand. The fact that he had the guts to stand up and fight for the interest of the rank and file developed the movement rapidly, but it also earned for him the bitterest enmity of the machine. They dubbed him the "Iron Dictator" of Taylorville.

Fred Bode, a picturesque figure, looking somewhat like the generally

accepted version of Buffalo Bill. Sixty-two years old with a splendid fighting record amongst the coal miners, Fred Bode helped to build the miners' union from its inception. He considers the United Mine Workers his child. When I met him he discussed the ailments of this child. He spoke slowly and calmly, puffing away on his pipe, now and then showing a twinkle of youthful keenness in his eyes.

"Well," he proceeded, "the machine accuses me of wanting to destroy the union. Destroy my own child? No, but it is sick; it needs medicine which will again make it healthy and vigorous, and I am going to help administer some."

There was a meeting in Kincaid, which is part of the Taylorville sub-district. Joe Angelo, secretary of the district Save the Union Committee, came to speak. Progressive miners were invited and about 250 of them appeared, mostly Italians, eager for the fight. In came also the district board member, Allan Heywood, and the sub-district president, Glasgow. They had no interest in the meeting. They did not dare to stop it and so they thought only of interfering as much as possible. Both continued to ask questions intended to sidetrack the real issue. They were accorded the floor until Fred Bode, who acted as chairman, thought it was going just a bit too far. He said to Allan Heywood: "Now you have had the floor a little bit too much and I am going to apply one of Lewis' famous convention rules—You popped up and you popped down, but the next time you pop up again you will be popped down." Heywood said nothing further but Fred Bode now carries the distinction of the "Iron Dictator."