

Illinois Miners to Fight Fishwick to the End

By ARNE SWABECK

What was once the proud backbone of the United Mine Workers of America, the Illinois District, is now being ground to pieces between the cunning policy of attacks of the operators and the sell-out of the union officials.

Fishwick Backs Operators

Moreover the Fishwick administration by its dealings with the operators has conceded point after point of gains won thru battles of the past. The result of its treason has been to eliminate any respect which it once may have enjoyed amongst the rank and file. Its own machine powers have been broken down. It has now the operators only to depend upon to come to its rescue. The latter have been willing, and in an effort to stop the rank and file opposition movement, on April first changed their policy and rapidly re-opened many large mines for operation but alas, after a few days of work, there were jobs only for a small force.

The mine bosses appearing at the shaft, picking those who were permitted to work, eliminated all who had shown themselves good union men.

From company unionism to complete union destruction is now the road laid out for the Illinois miners. The former is already taking place, but to the operators this means only a make-shift until they can proceed to the next step. That is, unless the rank and file opposition prevents this, to attempt to crush this opposition is the task the operators have assigned to their tools, the Fishwick administration.

Save-Union Forces Gain.

The situation would be a hopeless one indeed without the militant opposition to this treason represented by the Save-the-Union Movement. Undoubtedly, this movement is gaining despite the lack of available forces, and the fact that the union machinery is in the hands of the enemy.

The first inevitable results of the treasonable policy of separate agreements are now showing themselves. Its ultimate result must be wage cuts, and union destruction has long been acknowledged.

Result of Separate Agreements

The first results are that several local unions have themselves on their own hook signed separate agreements involving wage cuts. The Fishwick administration condemns these actions by the local unions and lifts their charter, while it tries to justify its own separate agreements which are in no way different. All the separate agreements signed give no protection whatever to working conditions. Men working on tonnage rate are compelled to clean out their own dead work lay their own tracks, etc. This is indirectly a wage cut.

Seven local unions in the north where the mines are small and the coal vein not very deep, fell into the trap of the separate agreement policy and made their own settlement on the basis of a wage cut, below the Jacksonville scale. The proceeded to form a new union, for which the state of Illinois most readily granted a charter.

In the heart of the southern field local union No. 959 also fell into the

trap and signed its own agreement as proposed by the mine superintendent appearing at the local meeting providing for a wage cut to 9 cents per ton for machine runners or a flat rate of \$10.07 a day. The revoking of the charters by the Fishwick administration is a maneuver to throw dust in the eyes of the coal miners, and shield its own policies. These local unions made a serious mistake, yet they did precisely what had been done by the district officials before. The whole separate agreement policy is responsible.

Prior to April First W. J. Jenkins, the president of the Illinois Coal Operators Association, referred to John L. Lewis as having promised wage cuts. In a statement issued he said that Lewis had given, "definite promise that he would take it upon himself to guarantee that Illinois would secure needed relief by April first." The relief sought by the operators was the wage reduction.

Miners Rebel.

Open rebellion has been the answer by the miners in many instances to the now unvariable conditions in the state, particularly those created by the contract for loading machines, conveyors, and other mechanical devices. Unemployment has increased, the speed-up has increased thru complete lack of working regulation. In DuQuoin the men struck against it and were literally forced back to work. Numerous resolutions of protest have been adopted by the local unions, some petitioning for special convention to rectify this evil. The DuQuoin locals have begun petitioning for special

conventions to abolish all sub-district officials who to them appear perfect parasites.

In this situation of chaos, confusion, and betrayal, the corrupt officials in a last effort to stem the tide of opposition are resorting to an intensification of their celebrated policy of expulsions. To the many victims of the past have been added those who signed the special convention call for Belleville, May 19th, some having been expelled for 99 years.

However, in this respect also the machine power is broken down. It has become a myth. Those cited for expulsion refused to appear before the district court, and the following answer made by the old fighter of Belleville, Luke Coffey to this summons is typical.

"Walter Nesbit

United Mine Workers of America
Springfield, Ill.

Gentlemen:

"Received your document. It appears to me that your henchmen and stoop pigeons of local 4638 would proceed along the line of the constitution and prefer charges against me in my local union.

"I realize that appearing before this board would be like going to law with the devil and holding court in hell."

The task of the Save-the-Union movement is made so much more difficult by this terrible wreckage of the once so proud backbone of the United Mine Workers of America. Knowing however, that it presents the only remedy for this dismal situation of chaos, confusion, and betrayal it is proceeding undaunted to perform its task.