



Striking miners at Avella, Pa., living in their tent colony after eviction by the Coal Co., and after the Lewis gang refused them lumber for barracks. To these miners a new union is not a theory; it is a vital necessity.

New Unionism in the Mines

By ARNE SWABECK

WITH the launching of the new national miners union at the Sept. 9-16 Convention in Pittsburgh another milestone will have been passed in the march of the American labor movement. It will signalize a definite turn away from surrender and toward militant struggle and organization.

The wreckage upon which this new union is being built strikingly illustrates the disastrous extent of the employers' offensive to smash the unions and their attacks upon the workers' standards of living in general. But this goal the employers could reach only with the assistance of the most criminally corrupt capitalist agents who ever infested themselves into labor's ranks. The rank and file coal miners are now in forcible terms repudiating the traitorous collusion of Lewis and his henchmen with the coal operators.

Other New Unions

Not only in the mine fields but in other industries also there are indications that the bosses' attacks will be fought and that the workers will follow increasingly the left wing leadership. In the textile industry powerful strikes against wage cuts are taking place in New Bedford and Fall River. While the old reactionary union leadership is working hand in hand with the bosses and with the police trying to break the strike as the price of eliminating the left wing the workers there to an increasing extent directly

follow the left wing leadership in the building of a new union in each place. This influence is extending to other textile centers and active preparations are now under way to link all the local organizations into one new national textile workers union.

In the needle trades the one time socialist leaders have become the bosses' agents of the blackest reactionary type and almost succeeded in bringing the workers back to the sweatshop conditions of old. These workers are now, led by their left wing, actively engaged in the building of a new union. These efforts are so far widespread among the ladies garment workers, the furriers and the hat and cap makers. But their union will be an industrial union for all the workers in the clothing industry. In numerous shops in the manufacturing industries, mostly unorganized, strikes have taken place due to dissatisfaction with the intense speed-up system and with wage cuts. In the automobile, oil and even in the steel industry local strikes occur: forerunners of bigger struggles to come. In the meat packing industry there are wage cuts and growing dissatisfaction among the workers. On the railroads the workers are pressing harder for their demands, just now on the Western lines 70,000 trainmen and conductors are taking a strike vote against the speed-up conditions.

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That this leftward turn finds expression among the unorganized workers is of real significance and indicates great prospects for the new union movement. Where this tendency grows it is a distinct rank and file one and in practically every case in direct opposition to the official union leadership.

History of Betrayal

The reactionary trade union leadership has followed its inevitable course of development. In 1919, at the beginning of the employers' post war offensive, they could still in a measure be pressed forward, although reluctantly, to offer some resistance. Great strikes took place. But shortly after that the period of surrender set in. The reactionary leaders orientated themselves toward class collaboration and efficiency schemes to avoid waste in industry. They surrendered to wage cuts and the speed-up system. They worked ardently to turn the trade unions into virtual company unions. These fakers became revealed as the tools and agents of capitalism.

In the mining industry the right wing reactionaries have traveled this road completely. When the "open shop" began to eat its way seriously into the organized coal mine territories the reactionary United Mine Workers of America told the miners to load clean coal and to speed-up so that the operators in the organized fields could more efficiently compete with those in the unorganized territories. They gave up the working conditions in the mines and control of the tonnage rate with the installment of loading machines and mechanical devices. Step by step they thus proceeded to betray strike after strike, to separate the miners in the anthracite from those in the soft coal districts. They gave up the Jacksonville scale and the national agreement, finally wrecking the union. Whatever agreements will now be signed by the old machine in Illinois, Indiana or fields further West will at best be company union agreements with the miners employed under practically non-union conditions.

Drive For Open Shop

But even company unions are not satisfactory to the employers. Their offensive is for the complete wiping out of all semblance of unionism. The employers aim for the "open shop," the coal operators follow this policy and have shown it conclusively in the wrecking of the mine workers' union. A company union agreement in the Western fields based upon a wage cut is just one more step in the wrecking process. It will not and cannot increase produc-

tion in these fields, or elsewhere, nor will it give more employment to the miners. This is known perfectly well to John L. Lewis, Fishwick of Illinois, Cartwright of Indiana and all the other henchmen of that decrepit machine. They are just appearing in their true role.

The final stage of the clash of policies between the militant left wing and the reactionary Lewis machine within the United Mine Workers has been reached. The new union is now actually being built. The correctness of the policies proposed by the militants in the past has been proven by every event up until the final destruction of the old union. That a new union must be built can now no longer be disputed. The difficulties in the way are immense. Today in building the union the coal miners will face the operators solidly united and with the firm backing of the whole employing class of the country. But the miners also have had some valuable, although costly, experiences and possess a great fighting union tradition. This tradition will become the very foundation of the new union.

Enormous Task

Immense are the tasks this new national miners union will face the day after its formation at the Pittsburgh convention September 9 to 16. Only a few remnants of a union are left with the overwhelming part of the industry unorganized and the miners working there under conditions of poverty defying description. That the new union will pay heed and actually organize the unorganized territories is already evidenced by the fact that an important part of the pre-convention activities is the building of union nuclei in the unorganized fields. Some have already been built and will be represented at the Pittsburgh convention.

The unemployment problem in the mine camps has long been a very serious one. That the new union will follow the opposite course from that pursued by the Lewis machine of trying to drive the several hundred thousand unemployed miners out of the industry has already been established. The history of the movement proves its energetic fight for the reduction of the working hours but in addition the militants are indicating their further course. The new union will be the instrument to help realize the organization of this great army of unemployed to fight side by side with those working in the mines.

What has been criminally surrendered by the Lewis machine can be recaptured only by the new union.