'S OF INTEREST TO ORGANIZED LABOR

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20,000 Cigar Makers on Strike

(Special to St. Louis Labor.)

New York, July 7.—We are living in a time when seeming impossibilities become realities. Today there are over 20,000 cigar makers of Greater New York on strike and this army of strikers seems to be growing every day. It is reported that the number of people employed in the cigar industry of Greater New York is about 30,000.

On June 28 and June 29 a convention of representatives of Cigar Makers took place at the Yorkville Forum, 227 East 84th street. For two days this gathering discussed the conditions of the army of men and women employed in the local cigar industry. Three hundred delegates represented a total of about 30,000 people, employed in 91 factories.

It was a so-called "Inter-Shop Convention," consisting of delegates from the International Cigar Makers' Union, an Independent Cigar Makers' Union with a considerable number of Spanish-speaking members and of the unorganized cigar factory workers, who constituted a considerable percentage of the people represented.

The object of this gathering was to attempt to secure an increase of 50 per cent in wages, the 44-hour workday, better conditions of work, and the recognition of the grievance committee. No employe shall be discharged until the grievance committee had investigated the case—this was another demand made by the convention.

The convention was by no means of the ordinary kind of gatherings. It was the expression of dissatisfaction of the thousands of suffering people of the New York cigar industry. When the convention was called to order, it was announced that in Greater New York alone over 6,000 employes of cigar factories were on strike; in addition strikes were in progress at Perth Amboy and New Brunswick, N. J. And the remarkable feature of the situation was that this army of strikers consisted almost of the unorganized!

During the discussion it was pointed out that every effort must be made to organize this vast army of cigar workers into one compact body in order to enable them to enforce their just demands and bring about the much-needed improvements. Conditions in the cigar industry were getting from bad to worse, the speakers all agreed, and there was no reason why the organization work should any longer be postponed.

On Tuesday, July 1, the "rebellion" of the New York cigar makers took place. I say rebellion, for such it was, a rebellion of misery! On the previous day a big meeting was held at the above-mentioned hall, at which it was decided to call on the 20,000 New York cigar workers to strike the following day, and fully 20,000 immediately responded to the call. This meeting, as the entire convention was unique in that it marked the operation of the new movement among the workers to try out one form of shop control.

Equalization of wages is one of the aims of the movement. The Spanish workers represent about 20 per cent of the strikers, Jack Milardo of the international advisory committee, said: "This is no time for factional fights. The manufacturers are looking for their own interests; not mine and not yours. We must look out for our own."

The convention took a decided stand against the so-called Employes' Benefit associations organized by the bosses, claiming that such associations were usually organized for the purposes of breaking up the union movement wherever possible.

A mass meeting held on July 1 was attended by over 10,000 strikers. All the trust factories and other large shops were involved in the strikes from the beginning. The last big strike in New York, which cost the international union and the local organizations over $500,000, was in 1900.

Headquarters of the strike committee have been established at the Labor Temple, 227 East 84th street. On Thursday, July 3, a monster mass meeting of strikers took place at the Central Opera House, on 67th street, at which many local labor leaders spoke in support of the strikers. By last Friday about 150 factories were involved in the strike.

The number of strikers has increased to 25,000, according to reports issued by the central strike committee. It is announced that the strikers are determined to make this a nation-wide fight and appeal to the organized workers throughout the land, in Canada and Porto Rico, to give them their support.

2,000 Strike in Boston.

Boston, July 7.—More than 2,000 cigar makers went on strike today in an effort to enforce demands for a wage increase of approximately 14 per cent. Most of the large shops were closed; the smaller manufacturers, who granted the demand, were not affected.

The Strikebreaker

A prominent clergyman once gave the following statement as his version of scabs or strike breakers after having been compelled to associate with them for a short time:

"After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad, the vampire, He had some awful substance left, with which He made a scab. A scab is a two-legged animal with a corkscrew soul—a watersogged brain, a combination backbone made of jelly and glue. Where others have their hearts he carries a tumor of rotten principle. When the scab comes down the street, men turn their backs, and the angels weep tears in heaven, and the devil shuts the gates of hell to keep him out. No man has a right to scab as long as there is a pool of water deep enough to drown his body in, or a rope long enough to hang his carcass with. Judas Iscariot was a gentleman compared with a scab, for, after betraying his Master, he had enough character to hang himself—and a scab has not. Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Judas Iscariot sold his Savior for 30 pieces of silver. Benedict Arnold sold his country for the promise of a commission in the English army. The modern strike breaker sells his birthright, his country, his wife, his children and his fellowman for an unfilled promise from a trust or a corporation. Esau was a traitor to himself. Judas Iscariot was a traitor to his God. Benedict Arnold was a traitor to his country. A strike breaker is a traitor to his God, his country, his family, himself and his class. A real man is never a strike breaker."

The successful ones are buying Thrift and War Savings stamps.

Morsels From a Sage's Scrap Book

When Was the First Thanksgiving?

Feb. 22, 1630, in Massachusetts. The day had been appointed for a general fast. No ship had arrived in a great length of time and their stock of provisions was nearly exhausted. At this critical moment a vessel arrived from England, laden with provisions, and they immediately changed the day of public fasting into one of public feasting.

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Bolshevik Jabs

FROM REVOLUTIONARY AGE

China refuses to sign the peace terms which merely proves that all the money we have spent on missionaries failed to corrupt the heathen.

* * *

"And it is much more than a treaty of peace with Germany," says President Wilson in speaking of the peace terms. We would have put it the other way round and said: "It is much less than a treaty of peace with Germany—it is a declaration of war."

* * *

General Smuts' protest which accompanied his signature shows at least that he learned something from his visit to Hungary.

* * *

We suppose that the signing of the document in Versailles means that we can now proceed with the other 22 wars in peace.

* * *

There is an important omission in the newspaper accounts of the ceremonies at Versailles. The entire press forgot to mention that the Bolsheviki were not present.

* * *

Their absence must not, however, be taken as indicative of a lack of interest on their part. It was merely due to the fact that they felt confident that the Big Four would do the job to their entire satisfaction.

* * *

Lenine is quoted as saying that he regards the document as a masterpiece, while Trotzky is of the opinion that a comparison of the propaganda values of the Paris document with those of the one signed at Brest-Litovsk conclusively prove that in this field the allies are immeasurably ahead of the Germans.

* * *

"After Brest-Litovsk," says the Russian war minister, "we swung Hungary into line and we were enabled to make the first definite impression on Germany herself. With the Versailles treaty as a basis we expect to swing the rest of the world into line and complete the conversion of Germany to the principles of Bolshevism."

* * *

It is reported in London that, as spokesman for the Monarchs' Union, King George has objected to the document on the ground that it gives the revolutionists altogether too much propaganda material. The Mikado has also lodged a formal protest on the ground that the League of Nations has usurped his Divine Right.

* * *

On the other hand Samuel Gompers expressed himself as entirely indifferent, saying that if the A. F. of L. could survive Atlantic City, it certainly was proof against any propaganda written in Versailles.

* * *

The Lusk committee took a more serious view of the matter and, while stating that Versailles was outside its jurisdiction, informed our correspondent that it had the subject under consideration and would probably seize the document if it entered through the port of New York and thus prevent its distribution in America.

ANOTHER VICTIM OF UNSANITARY JAILS

Seattle, July 17.—Joseph A. Kelly, one of the victims of the Seattle general strike misrepresentation, passed away at 3 a. m. Tuesday, July 8, after several weeks of illness.

Kelly, who was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, was active in the interests of the working class for the past 10 years. He took part in several free speech fights on the Pacific coast, the last one being the Everett fight of 1916, where he was beaten into unconsciousness at Beverly park on the night of Oct. 27. Determined to do his share to gain the right of free assemblage and freedom of speech for the working class, Kelly went to Everett on Nov. 5, 1916, and was wounded in the battle with the gunmen in the pay of the Everett Commercial club. He was one of the 74 men held on the charge of first degree murder and was released from jail on May 8 after a jury had brought in a verdict of "not guilty" in the Tracy trial.

Not being of robust health, Kelly suffered a great deal from his long incarceration and he had about regained his strength when he was arrested by King county officials on Feb. 5, 1919, an dcharged with "attempting to overthrow the government by force and violence," etc., along with 27 other victims during the general strike. He was held in the unsanitary cells of the King county jail until May 10 when he was released on $1,500 bail. When released his health was completely ruined.

Fellow workers of the Industrial Workers of the World placed him in the care of a physician in a private hospital, but the system and its jails had done its work and another name had been added to the list of martyrs to the cause of labor.

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THE MOONEY STRIKE

The capitalist press is gleefully howling that the Mooney strike was a fizzle, but a careful check indicates that more than half a million organized workers laid down their tools on behalf of the persecuted labor leader. That so many workers should have thrown every thought of economic security for themselves aside to secure justice for a fellow worker is the realization of a new vision of labor organization and a new concept of labor brotherhood.

Without adequate organization for the purpose, and against the entire inertia of the big machine of the labor movement and the active opposition of practically all the officials of international unions and state labor bodies, the bringing out of a half million workers is a signal triumph to the International Defense league and presages still greater results when the five day strike for Sept. 1 is called.

It is all the more remarkable that the comparatively small number involved struck at all when they knew they were in such a hopeless minority throughout the nation, but again their courage has pointed the way for the rest, and there is no doubt of what will be the outcome next September—if indeed, Mooney has not had a fair trial before that time.

The failure of the strike, if it can be called failure, was in the divided opinion as to the best method to pursue, most of the organized workers being perfectly willing to do anything that would bring results for Mooney, but being skeptical of the success of a general strike. There is one thing, however, that every working man and woman in the nation may stand together on from now till next September, and it is one thing that will bring tremendous results—that is to boycott all California products of all kinds until Mooney is given justice. If you must have oranges, lemons or other citrus fruits, see that they come from Florida or Georgia; get your melons from Colorado and eastern Washington, and so on down the line, and capital in California will begin to take notice.—Seattle Union Record.

Treat yourself — buy Thrift and War Savings stamps.

Boneheads vs. Bolsheviks

Reconstruction for May has the following from the pen of Basil M Manly, joint chairman National War Labor Board:

"If we have a revolution in the United States, it will be produced not by the bolsheviks, but by the boneheads.

"There are many different varieties of boneheads now at work in different parts of the United States doing their utmost to bring about revolution, but just at the present moment the most perniciously active boneheads are those who are dictating the labor policies of the steel companies in western Pennsylvania.

"Ably assisting the steel companies in the preparations for a revolution are a score or more of corporation-controlled mayors and burgesses of the so-called steel towns and a host of private detectives and "strong-arm" men whose jobs are dependent on the existence of visible industrial unrest. In the steel towns free speech, free assemblage and other fundamental American rights are being crushed and trodden under foot as ruthlessly and far more efficiently than the days of darkest czarism.

"As a background, it is necessary to understand that, more than a quarter of a century ago, the Carnegie Steel company, at the end of a hard fought labor war, culminating in the Homestead tragedy, succeeded in breaking the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, then the strongest if not the largest labor union in the United States.

"For 26 years, therefore, the steel companies have been in the saddle. Superintendents, clerks and other officials of the steel companies were put into power, through the far-reaching influence of the corporations, as burgesses and mayors of the steel-towns, and a system of espionage was built up so complete that no stranger could be in the towns for 24 hours without his business being known or his purposes directly questioned. Trade union organizers and other so-called agitators have been supressed or deported, sometimes under cloak of farcical legal proceedings engineered by the corporation-controlled officials of the steel towns, and sometimes without even color of legal sanction, by the armed guards and private detectives of the steel companies.

"In 1902 an attempt was made to rebuild the American Association of Iron and Steel Workers, but through the vacillating policy of the leaders and the ruthless power of the steel corporations, the strike was crushed and the last vestige of organization in the mills of the United States Steel corporation and the leading independent steel companies was eliminated.

"Since then, furtive attempts to organize the steel workers have been made, but entirely without success, until a little more than a year ago 24 international unions of the American Federation of Labor joined in the creation of the national committee for organizing iron and steel workers.

"In order that there might be no possible charge of disloyalty or pro-Germanism, Samuel Gompers, himself, became chairman of the committee, and William Z. Foster, who had displayed remarkable zeal and efficiency in the organization of the packing house employes, was made secretary-treasurer. Foster has been in active charge of the organization work in the field.

"The committee started in South Chicago and found the steel workers so anxious for the benefits of organization, as a means of protecting themselves against the autocratic power of the greatest corporation in the world, that the meeting places were packed and thousands of members were signed up every day. No active opposition from the steel companies was encountered — probably because of the close proximity to Chicago, where the packing house employes had just been successfully organized and had pledged themselves to the support of their brothers in the steel mills.

Pretexts for Prohibiting Meetings.

"When the committee entered the Pittsburgh district, however, an entirely different situation was encountered. Burgesses and mayors of steel towns refused to permit meetings to be held under the auspices of the American Federation of Labor, and when, in some of the larger towns, buildings were rented for organization meetings, financial pressure was brought to bear upon the proprietors to cancel the leases. Health authorities suddenly discovered that the halls were unsanitary, although other meetings were permitted in the same halls during the same week without fumigation or other precautions, or the building inspectors, with surprising conscientiousness, decreed that halls were unsafe which were occupied on every day in the week except that for which the committee had announced its meeting.

"When meetings were held in the open air they were surrounded by a swarm of detectives and company guards, accompanied by timekeepers, who made lists of all the men who attended the meetings.

"Foster and other active workers of the committee were kept under and had to be continually on guard to detect company-spies who tried to get into the inner circles of the committee in order to learn their plans and counsel unwise actions that would discredit the organization campaign and, if possible, give some ground for a cry of pro-Germanism.

"These repressive tactics, while un-American and contrary to the solemn pact signed by the representatives of labor and capital during the war and embodied in the proclamation of the president, might not have aroused the steel workers, accustomed for more than a quarter of a century to the excesses of autocratic industrial power, had it not been that some diabolical mind or set of minds in the steel companies, with a perversity almost beyond belief, inaugurated a terroristic policy of making examples of the oldest and best known employes who showed any disposition to become interested in the union.

"In the Jones and Laughlin Steel company, for instance, among a number of others, was an old roller named John Flannagan, who had been a hard-working, faithful employe of the company for 34 years. Everybody knew Flannagan and nearly everybody loved the genial old Irishman. Those that didn't know Flannagan knew Mrs. Flannagan, who had been a good neighbor to all those who lived in the same district of the south side slums.

"Flannagan went to one union meeting. He was spotted by a timekeeper and the next morning was given his time. He was broken hearted, because all the big steel companies have a dead-line of 45 years beyond which no skilled workman will be employed, and 35 years for unskilled workmen. This rule was somewhat relaxed while the war was on and labor was scarce, but Flannagan had seen men standing unemployed at the steel company's gates and knew that if the rule was rigidly enforced his chance was gone to earn a living in the industry to which his life had been devoted.

"Flannagan knew, and all his friends knew, that this had happened just because on one night a spark of his old manhood and independence had flamed up and he had gone to a union meeting to learn how he and his brother workmen might bind themselves together and secure some measure of self-protection against the blind, autocratic force in opposition to which Flannagan and all the other thousands of men, acting separately, were powerless. Flannagan was driven to desperation and there arose in all his friends a deep and intense anger and an abiding desire for vengeance.

"Now Flannagan was only one of hundreds of steel workers grievously injured by the same autocratic invasion of their most sacred rights. Not all had been so long in the company's service. Few were as trusted and as generally reverred by their fellow workers. But all had friends, and all knew they were the victims of cruel injustice, arbitrarily exercised.

"At the same time, Flannagan's case does not stand alone in any respect. Down in Johnstown, Pa., where the Cambria Steel company has its plants, there is a deaf mute, William H. Sibert, who worked for the company for more than 20 years and became one of its skilled employes. One night he, too, attended a meeting, joined the organization and was discharged on a minute's notice. Sibert's life has been given to steel. He knows no other trade and his infirmity makes it impossible for him to get work in any other plant.

"The steel companies apparently hoped that by picking out the veterans—men with families or men who are paying for homes — they would create fear in the hearts of the rest of the men, but instead they have created only a dangerous hatred and a surging unrest.

Trouble Brewing Around Johnstown

"As a result of these tactics and the consequent resentment of all classes of employes, the movement in Johnstown and some of the other surrounding towns, has now apparently gotten entirely beyond any possibility of company control.

"On Sunday, March 16, Frank Morrison, secretary of the American Federation of Labor, went to Johnstown to speak to the steel workers. The largest theater in the town was packed to suffocation, and so were two other of the biggest halls in town, which were hastily secured to handle the overflow crowds, and yet pickets had to be stationed at the doors of all three halls to check the crowds seeking admission. Thousands thronged the streets, unable to obtain admission.

"Throughout the entire steel region, members of other trade unions are coming to the aid of the steel workers and it is announced that 5,000 members of the United Mine Workers, with several hundred ex-soldiers at their head, will soon march into Monessen, where meetings have been prohibited by order of the burgess, and insist on their right to hold a meeting whether the burgess likes it or not.

"The situation is rapidly nearing a crisis, and if the boneheads who have been dictating the labor policy of the steel companies continue to control, there can be no other result than another Homestead a thousand times magnified.

"Some of the companies, it is true, have made a feint at establishing a new and more enlightened policy. The Cambria Steel company, for example, several months ago inaugurated what the officials called a plan of collective bargaining, but which the men called 'the company union.' At the first election practically all the committeemen elected were bosses or other 'safe' men. 'Collective bargaining' was in high favor with the heads of the company and articles were written about the new era of good feeling.

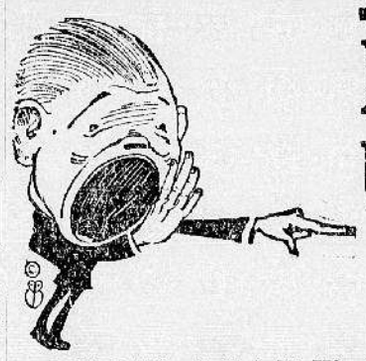
"A little while ago, however, a new election was held and a large number of union men elected upon the committee. Suddenly collective bargaining fell into disfavor and, upon the most transparent of pretexts, the company proceeded to discharge all the union men on the committee who had the courage to speak about the grievances of those whom they represented.

"Most of the steel companies, however, have not even pretended enlightenment and have apparently proceeded on the theory that if they did not drastically cut wages until the streets were full of unemployed and were ruthless enough in the suppression of attempts at organization, there was no danger.

"As an undercurrent to the great tide of unrest which is sweeping over the Pittsburgh district and the surrounding steel towns, is a rapidly growing distrust of government, and of all who speak in the name of the law. The only government with which the steel workers come in contact is the corporation - controlled government of the steel towns, which they have constantly seen perverted to crush their most elemental rights. Such government they hate, and they know no other.

"I commend the steel industry to the attention of the Overman committee as the most prolific breeding-place of bolshevism in the United States. I make this commendation with a confidence born of long and disillusioning experience that nothing will be done to alleviate this situation until the shedding of human blood compels attention.

"Then it may be too late."



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