

The Great West Coast Marine Strike

PART 2.

(By SAM DARCY.)

The Struggle For Rank and File Control.

A strike movement cannot stand still. It must either spread and grow in militancy, or recede. Realizing this, the militant elements laid their plans for the period of activity following May 2. The first step was to get the seamen out in sympathy actions. The Marine Workers' Industrial Union, even during the week previous to the calling of the strike, was already laying its plans for sympathetic actions. When the actual strike was called, the M.W.I.U. immediately began by calling meetings of ship's crews, and held conferences of ship's delegates. By May 12, a large conference of ship's delegates organized by the M.W.I.U. voted a go into sympathetic strike.

In the course of the next few days, the sympathy strike movement spread so that practically every ship coming into port was deserted by its crews. At first, the International Seamen's Union, an affiliate of the A. F. of L., led by the notorious labor fakers, Scharrenberg and Furuseth, stood aside, expecting that the seamen would not respond to any strike movement. There was skepticism even among I.L.A. members concerning how effective such a movement might be. At best, they hoped it would be a minor auxiliary aid to the longshore strike itself. While these groups wavered concerning the value of a seamen's strike movement, the M.W.I.U. with the crews of the newly struck ships, and the seafarers held conferences and set up an independent set of demands, so that the seamen's strike, which began purely as a sympathetic movement to the longshoremen, was transformed into a fully independent strike, with their own demands. In the subsequent period, the main problem became how to coordinate their strike settlement with that of the longshoremen. By May 16, the locals of the I.S.U. saw that they were being completely isolated by their refusal to strike, and so on that day the I.S.U. called upon its members and the ship's crews to join the strike. To this day, however, Andrew Furuseth and the International Executive Board have not yet approved of the strike. Technically, therefore, the I.S.U. strike was illegal, because under their constitution, strikes are not valid until they are authorized by the International Office. On May 17, the stewards and cooks struck. On May 17, the master-mates and pilots, a small organization with militants in it, joined, followed by the marine engineers.

MOVE TO BRING OUT TEAMSTERS.

While the movement among the seamen was being organized by the M.W.I.U., the longshoremen were bending their efforts to call out the teamsters. The teamsters play a particularly strategic role for longshoremen. With the exception of only one other means of transportation (namely, the State Belt Line in California, of which later), the teamsters are the men who move cargo after it is loaded onto the docks. From the first day of the longshore strike, all the pickets were instructed to talk to the men on the trucks, and urge them not to haul the cargo, but to join the strike. In the meantime, a committee was set to the Teamsters' Union, to get them to join the action. At first Michael Casey, the chief labor faker of the Teamsters' Union, stood in the way of any sympathetic action and refused to allow the question to be taken up. However, because of the continual reiteration and discussions between the longshore pickets and the teamsters, in the course of the few days following, the teamsters were so thoroughly won over that finally, on May 14, the labor fakers were forced to yield. On that day, a decision was taken by the Teamsters' Union not to haul any cargo off the docks. This did not solve the problem altogether, because the most effective method for sympathy action on the part of the teamsters would have been a complete strike.

THE QUESTION OF THE NEGRO WORKERS.

The next question was that of the Negro workers. For years the shipowners had followed a discriminatory policy against the Negro workers. They did this chiefly through isolating more than one hundred Negro longshoremen into one dock, namely, the Lucienback Dock. They held off

hundreds of others, always promising them a job, but never giving them one. They continually held the lure before these Negro workers that in the event of the white workers going on strike, the Negro workers would then be assured jobs. The I.L.A., in its first stages, aided this discrimination, chiefly through their passive attitude towards the question of Negro workers, and in some cases actual antagonism towards including them in the Union. Following the rank-and-file convention, however, this was largely broken down, but by then the Negro workers were not convinced of the sincerity of the I.L.A. men, and only a few joined that union. The Negro bourgeois press tried to take advantage of this situation. The San Francisco Spokesman, for example, published chiefly for Northern California, carried several articles in which it warned the Negro workers against believing the pledges of the white workers for solidarity and against joining the white workers' union. They spoke sneeringly of the attitude of the I.L.A. men, who, they alleged, had adopted a patronizing attitude towards Negro workers, only because they "wanted to squeeze a few more nickels out of the shipowners." This attitude was unjustified by fact, except in isolated cases. At the early stage of the strike, certain backward elements had made statements about this being a white man's strike. But this by no means was the general opinion. Especially so, because at the rank-and-file convention and subsequently, the policy of a passive attitude towards Negroes and discrimination against them, especially in the San Francisco Bay area, was broken down and the rank and file militants of the I.L.A. made a sincere effort to unite black and white workers. The policy of this Negro bourgeois paper was to encourage the Negroes to become scabs. Precisely when the militancy of the workers offered the most favorable moment to promote Negro and white unity, they tried to prevent unity just at the moment of its possible culmination. However, with the aid of the Communist Party, the Scottsboro Action Committee, and the I.L.D., the Negro workers were reached with appeals against this position, and success was achieved in that only a very few of the Negroes finally scabbed. At this writing, although the books of the I.L.A. are officially closed to membership for the period of the strike, a move is afoot to make an exception of the Negro workers. By this, the I.L.A. men are showing they are willing to go out of their way in order to make up for their previous passivity towards the very important question of uniting black and white workers.

Finally, in the calling of the strike, the militants were confronted with the need of avoiding the error that was committed at the time when the first call to

strike was issued. This error consisted in not developing the leadership of the San Francisco Strike Committee.

UNION LEGALITY AND THE STRIKE COMMITTEE.

The question of whether pushing the leadership of the strike committee as against the District Executive Board, was within the limits of union legality, still prevented the strike committee militants from taking aggressive action. After several discussions, the comrades were finally convinced by being given the example of the struggle between the Soviets and the Constituent Assembly in Russia in 1917, where despite the legality of the Constituent Assembly and the unofficial character of the Soviets, all the life and problems of the people were centered in the Soviets, so that eventually in the course of struggle, the masses began to look to the Soviets for leadership out of their position and not to the Constituent Assembly. In the discussion, it was brought out how under the special circumstances which confronted us in this strike we could do the same thing by putting all the questions of relief, defense, picketing, negotiations, etc., to the strike committee, how rapidly the workers would themselves forget the strictures of legality and would instead accept the Strike Committee as their leaders, at the same time, preventing any effort of the District Executive Committee to interfere with it. This would overcome the decision formerly made by the membership meeting on Monday prior to the calling of the strike on May 9, where it was decided to put all power in the hands of the District Executive Board. As a matter of fact, our policy in this connection proved to be correct, and now in the San Francisco local, the strike committee holds the real power of leadership of the masses of the longshoremen. They have succeeded in centering all the life of the strike into this Strike Committee, with the exception of negotiations. The failure to take over negotiation was paid for dearly in the weeks that followed. It was finally accomplished, however, on June 17, when Ryan and Company were booted and hissed off the platform. In this way, we have overcome the error previously committed through abiding by the limit of legality, and have raised the Strike Committee, which was composed of militant elements, to the position of the real leaders among the workers.

PROBLEMS IN THE CONDUCTING OF THE STRIKE.

Once the strike was under way we divided our tasks under three main headings:

1. To keep the men united and prevent splits which might result in isolating the militants.
2. To keep the militancy on a continually upward swing.
3. To prevent any sell-out, and to gain as much as possible for

the men out of the strike.

In the first days of the strike, the first job was the most difficult of all. The tradition, in the industry was a splitting up of all the men into independently acting crafts. The seamen were under constant apprehension that the longshoremen would settle the strike and return to work without any consideration for them. In this fear the seamen were justified, because the longshoremen were under constant pressure from the I.L.A. officials "not to have too many tails to their kite," by which they meant to negotiate their own agreement independent of all the other crafts. On the other hand, the I.S.U. seamen were under a terrific pressure from their own leaders, who intrigued with the shipowners and who urged the men to "utilize the opportunity to get the most out of it for themselves, irrespective of the other crafts." Both groups of fakers warned the men of a repetition of the 1919 and 1921 strikes, where, in the first, the seamen scabbed on the longshoremen, and in the second, the longshoremen scabbed on the seamen.

The problem of unity was further complicated by the fact that most of the men were not yet convinced that Ryan and the other fakers were not their friends. Under pressure of this confused attitude of the men, even many of the militants were afraid to express sharply any formulations against Ryan. As a result, on a number of occasions the Western Worker and the Communist elements in the strike had to make concessions on minor points in the formulation of official strike publications so as not to break the unity of the men and to keep that unity for the main objectives of the strike. The full and correct statements were published independently in the name of the Party or the Waterfront Worker militant group.

UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT IN VARIOUS PORTS.

A third problem in maintaining the unity was the uneven development of the strike. For example, in the Northwest, shipping was completely tied up. This same condition existed in San Francisco, with but one slight exception, of which we shall speak later. In Los Angeles, however, both because the union leadership was the most reactionary, and because militant organization was weak and the terror strong, scabbing went on on a large scale. As a result in Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco, the A. F. of L. fakers, the capitalist press, and the shipowners raised the cry that the continuation of the strike was a scheme of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, because it diverted shipping from other ports to their benefit. There was a strong danger that the men would be influenced by this agitation, and it had to be counteracted.

A fourth problem in maintaining unity was created by the continuous splitting activities of the fakers. This included such diverse elements as Paddy Morris, a renegade of Tacoma who is working with the Proletarian Party; "Dirty" White of the Socialist Party of San Francisco; Holman, former president of the San Francisco local, and a typical tool in the hands of the reactionary A. F. of L. officials; Lewis and Company, the leaders of the District Executive Board; and Ryan, president of the I.L.A. One example for each will illustrate the activity of these gentlemen: Paddy Morris, Renegade.

MILITANT PHRASES USED TO DISGUISE SELL-OUT.

When Ryan first arrived in San Francisco the fakers apparently decided to utilize his fresh arrival in order to stampede the militants into giving all power to the reactionaries in the settlement of the strike. In this, they almost succeeded through utilizing Paddy Morris. Morris arose in the local union meeting as it opened and delivered a long harangue in which he denounced capitalists, spoke for the class struggle, hurled for a militant strike, and finally concluded with the proposal that:

1. The seamen and longshoremen hold separate negotiations, and do not settle the strike jointly.
2. Hours and wages should be referred to arbitration.
3. The question of hiring halls be left in the hands of Ryan.

Under the impetus created by his preliminary revolutionary remarks, the men were confused

and private, and freedom of speech, press, and freedom of assembly as nothing but illusions, intended to deceive the workers into believing that they really manage the government. In times of crises these so-called liberties are abrogated by the authorities as has been demonstrated here in San Francisco the last few weeks. We must, however, fight for these privileges, otherwise we surrender without a struggle to fascism, which is government by terror by the capitalist class, no longer able to control the workers through the forms of democracy in the epoch of finance imperialist capitalism.

Q.—Have you ever known a period in recent United States history when the ruling class was more brutal in its attacks on the workers?

A.—The history of the United States is a history of bloody suppression of the working class whenever they have organized to improve their economic condition. At the present time the brutality used against the workers is more open and widespread because the threat to capitalism is greater than it has ever been before.

Q.—Do you find the majority of capitalist judges sympathetic to the workers?

A.—The majority of judges before whom I have tried cases have betrayed bitter animus toward workers and have been unable to disguise their bias and prejudice.

Q.—When and how can members of the working class get justice?

A.—There is no possibility of justice under a class society. Only at a time when classes have been abolished, will it be possible to enforce a system of laws which will actually achieve a fair measure of justice.

"No Justice Under Capitalist Society"

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug. 13.—In clear-cut fashion Leo Gallagher, fighting candidate for Associate Justice of the State Supreme Court, in the following interview with a representative of the Western Worker answers several questions of immediate and vital importance to the working class. Needless to say, his opponents have never made any statements on these issues:

Question.—Is the move of certain Los Angeles lawyers to "outlaw" the Communist Party constitutional or unconstitutional? Why?

Answer.—The effort to outlaw

Gallagher Election Depends on Primaries

Only two weeks to the primaries—two weeks in which to pile up a huge vote for Leo Gallagher, candidate for Associate Justice of the State Supreme Court of California.

Gallagher must come out one of the two highest, running for that office, IF HE IS TO REMAIN ON THE BALLOT FOR THE ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER.

Gallagher needs little introduction to California workers. In addition to meeting the many strict technical requirements demanded of candidates for judicial offices (to keep workers out), Gallagher is every inch a champion of the toiling masses and a militant fighter. He is no lawyer who occasionally takes a worker's case. ALL HIS TIME AND ENERGY IS DEVOTED IN THE BATTLE FOR THE OPPRESSED.

In the days when Hynes' Red Squad thugs reigned supreme in Southern California, he was one of the foremost fighters to blast the way, so workers' organizations could regain their rights to meetings and function legally.

He, more than any other individual, helped to put the Mooney fight on a broad militant basis—defended him in his trial last year, and now is the attorney for making the pardon appeal to Governor Merriam.

Gallagher was one of the group of international attorneys sent to Germany to defend Dimitroff, and was chosen by the Nazis as the one to be ejected out of the country.

The minute he stepped off the ferry in San Francisco, when he returned, he was greeted by thousands of longshoremen. A few hours later he was already defending strikers in court.

Now, when Fascism is grabbing at the throats of the workers of California, Gallagher is on the job defending the workers against fascist judges.

Can Gallagher poll enough votes to remain on the ballot for the November election? HE CERTAINLY CAN.

WHEN HE RAN FOR JUDGE IN THE LOS ANGELES LOCAL ELECTIONS LAST YEAR HE POLLED ALMOST 70,000 VOTES. IT IS ESPECIALLY SINCE THEN THAT GALLAGHER'S WORK AS A DEFENDER OF WORKERS IN ALL STRUGGLES SPREAD TO ALL CORNERS OF THE STATE, AND WORLD.

The masses are for Gallagher. He is endorsed by many of the outstanding progressive-minded people. The Communist Party proudly endorses him. BUT FOR THE REMAINING TWO WEEKS ENDORSING MUST BE SUPPLEMENTED BY A MASS DRIVE TO TURN OUT THE VOTE.

MANY VOTERS DO NOT KNOW THAT IN THIS CASE THE PRIMARIES WILL PROVE DECISIVE. WHO WILL TELL THEM?

IT IS UPON THE SUPPORTERS OF THE MILITANT WORKERS' MOVEMENT THAT THIS TASK DEPENDS! IF THE HATRED OF THE WORKERS AGAINST THE FASCIST JUDGES IS TO MEAN ANYTHING, IT SHOULD BE TRANSLATED INTO A MASS DRIVE FOR GALLAGHER!

and swept off their feet, and on that evening, the fakers actually succeeded in putting this program across. Two days later, at a special meeting called by the Strike Committee, after the men had had time to examine the meaning of their decisions, most of these resolutions were rescinded.

"Dirty" White.

"Dirty" White, of the Socialist Party, maintained that his only difference with the Communists and other militants in the strike was that he believed the strikers had the best chance if the Communists stayed in the background. He believed this so firmly that when the I.L.A. called for a mass parade and Civic Center demonstration one Sunday, he went to various organizations and urged them to answer the I.L.A. call only on condition that it would be definitely decided that no Communists were either to participate in the parade or to speak at the meeting. Incidentally, this action, when exposed before the

men, temporarily at least, eliminated "Dirty" White from the scene.

Lewis and Co.

Lewis and Company, the leaders of the District Executive Board at the early Strike Publicity Committee meetings, sneered at everything the Strike Publicity Committee did, with an air of confidence that the strike would soon be broken and all these "Reds" would be given their place, while he and his reactionary clique would ride high. This attitude on the part of Lewis and Company kept them aloof from the San Francisco Strike Publicity Committee for the first three weeks of the strike. Their action, in fact, helped the militants, because it gave them a breathing space in which to consolidate their strength. It was only after the first three weeks that Lewis and Company, seeing their abstention was futile, entered with their disruptive tactics.

(Continued in next issue.)

Hayward Comrades Challenge Thugs to Defend Action

COMMUNISTS DEMAND DEBATE: "DEFEND STAND OR SHUT UP" IS CHALLENGE

HAYWARD, Calif.—The following letter was sent to the Hayward Review and to the Oakland Tribune, on August 3:

Editor:

Since the Hayward vigilantes and the press that supports their "lawful" tactics are so certain that labor unions and Communism constitute a menace—then surely they will grasp at the opportunity to try and prove it in a public debate. And since the use of the Hayward High School has been consistently refused workers for such a purpose, then let these "respectable" people arrange for the use of the school at what time they choose (within two weeks). Let them find the two most capable speakers they know to defend the affirmative of the question: "Is Communism a

"Dis Ain't My Line!"



Menace?" I will arrange for two local speakers to answer the negative. The public will be the judge.

If the civic fathers accept this challenge, let them answer publicly, through the pages of the Review. If they refuse to accept the challenge, let them forever hold their peace—and not disturb the peace of honest workers through terroristic actions and lies.

Sincerely,
MARION RUIZ,
Organizer, Communist Party,
Hayward Section.