

Miners and Railroaders Must Help Organize Steel Mills and Wipe Out the 12-Hour Day

By JAY LOVESTONE

In the face of the most powerfully organized corporation in the world, supported by the strongest government on earth, the American steel workers have been helpless. Against the serried ranks of this unscrupulous band of exploiters and oppressors the steel workers have presented a miserably organized and wretchedly led army.

But, much as the strength of the Steel Trust and the help given it by the Government may be responsible for the degrading conditions, low pay and inhuman working hours in the industry, most of the blame for the intolerable situation must be placed on the heads of the labor bureaucracy. One need but examine the outstanding evils of the Steel Industry to be convinced that here more than in any other American industry is there a pressing demand for organization. Yet the record of inactivity in unionizing the steel workers is about as black as any achieved by our reactionary labor leaders.

Plight of the Workers

Appearing before the Interchurch Commission, a Pittsburgh Professor of Economics described the organization of the Steel Industry as "highly militarized." He said in part: "The general staff of the Carnegie Company is one of the most efficient in the world of business. The superintendents, department managers and foremen are splendidly loyal efficient officers with high morale. Bound to them are the non-commissioned officers, such gang leaders as rollers, blowers, melters and other top-skilled Americans, who are part bosses, part workmen. Altogether this administrative group, almost a third of the force, has a really military efficiency, bound to the company by stock participation, bonuses, loans, house-rentals and pensions. The rank and file of the army consists of the great mass of low-paid overworked unskilled foreign-born workers.

Thru this splendid organization the Steel Magnates have been able to pursue their "Catch 'em young, treat 'em rough, tell 'em nothing" labor policy. A friendly critic of Mr. Gary, quoted by the Interchurch investigators, has thus characterized this policy: "The trouble is that the Corporation is still in the stage of detectives and toilets." The workers dare not discuss their jobs even in normal times for fear of being discharged or transferred to a worse job.

The Strike Committee, in answer to President Wilson's request for a postponement of the strike, pictured this condition of the workers in the following:

"Men have been discharged in increasingly large numbers day by day. Threats and intimidation are resorted to for the purpose of putting the men in fear and preventing them from the exercise of their own free will. They are coerced into signing statements that they are not members nor will become members of any labor organization and threatened with eviction, black-list, denial of credit, and starvation."

Citing a typical instance of this condition the Interchurch Commission reported:

"Joseph Yart, 216 Woodville Ave., Johnstown, was employed by the Cambria Steel Company for forty years in the car works and was never discharged before. He became a member of the union on Feb. 3rd and was discharged on May 12th, by Superintendent Hill. . . . Mr. Yart protested that he had worked there for forty years, that he is now 54 years of age and can't work very well on the outside and the only reply he got was: 'You can't work here any more. You are an agitator and a disturber in the car department.'"

"One of Mr. Yart's sons was in the army of occupation, and Mr. Yart now complains: 'My son went to fight for democracy and I am thrown out on the street without any means of livelihood.'"

Part and parcel of Gary's policy of "not dealing with labor unions" is the best financed and most widespread system of professional strike-breaking and detective agencies in the world making profits out of clubbing and jailing workers.

Gompers and the 1919 Steel Strike

In the light of the above the failure of Gompers and his henchmen to give adequate support to the striking steel workers in 1919 is an irretrievable crime against the whole American working class.

Speaking of the Great Strike, the Interchurch Commission said: "Causes of defeat, second in importance only to the fight waged by the Steel Corporation, lay in the organization and leadership, not so much of the strike itself, as of the American labor movement."

Gompers did not address a single meeting of steel workers during the strike. He did not attend a single meeting of the National Committee meeting in Pittsburgh. The case of Gompers attending meetings of the National Committee for organizing the steel workers was a case of the mountain really coming to Mahomet because Mahomet would not come to the mountain. The only meetings of the National Committee that Gompers attended were those held in Washington. The National Committee had to move its meetings to Gompers, to the city where he

was, from Pittsburgh, in order to have him attend.

Just at this time, while things were coming to a showdown, the President of the American Federation of Labor saw fit to take a junketing trip to Mexico. The organization drive of the National Committee made it too hot for him in the United States at that time. Gompers spent a month on this trip to monkey around with the Conference of the still-born Pan-American Federation of Labor.

While the workers were straining every ounce of energy to organize for a fight against the 12-Hour Day, Sam Gompers took a flying trip to Europe and helped frame that damnable Versailles Treaty which has enslaved hundreds of thousands of workers and made millions the pawns of the imperialists. Six months were spent by the "Grand Old Man" of the American labor movement in the gay life of Paris. All this time the steel workers back home were looking forward to help from their leaders in the struggle against the unutterable conditions.

As a matter of fact Gompers did not find it safe enough to indorse the strike until 400,000 were out in an open battle against the Steel Trust. What is even worse, once the strike preparations were in full swing and the workers were all keyed up for a battle royal, Gompers publicly compromised the whole strike by coming out for Wilson's plan to postpone action until after his Industrial Peace Conference. At this time over 30,000 workers had already been discharged for union activities.

Tho the enemy confronting the steel workers was the strongest one ever faced by striking workers anywhere, and tho the Governmental forces at the disposal of the Steel Trust were unlimited, yet Gompers gave only a dozen organizers to the National Organization campaign and strike. The financial support tendered the strikers was totally insufficient. Discussing this phase of the Great Steel Strike, William Z. Foster, the noted leader of the 1919 struggle pointed out that:

"Probably no big modern trade union organizing campaign and strike has been conducted on such slender means. . . ."

"Often the National Committee had to beg for weeks to have a man sent in to organize a local union, the members for which it had already enrolled. Hundreds of local unions suffered and many a one perished outright for want of attention. Whole districts had to be neglected with serious consequences when the strike came."

And while the National Committee was calling together a delegate conference in order to enthrone the workers and throw them into the struggle for a test of strength, the reactionary leader M. F. Tighe, a pal of Gompers and President of the Amalgamated Association, made an attempt to split the forces of the workers. In the face of this call of the National Committee Mr. Tighe addressed a letter to Gary requesting a separate Conference. Fortunately for the steel workers Gary turned down Tighe's offer and they were saved from this vile treachery.

Threatens to Move an Inch

The recent report of the American Iron and Steel Institute proposing to continue the 12-Hour Day and the last exchange of vague meaningless promises between Gary and Harding on this subject for political purposes have raised a storm of public opinion against the Two-Shift system. Because of this avalanche of protest of church bodies, liberals, and members of even the most conservative of the population, Gompers has been forced to wake up. Gompers is now compelled to make hollow promises as to organizing the workers.

Gompers has announced that an organization campaign will very soon be launched amongst the steel workers. How half-hearted and faint an attempt this is to be and how unwillingly Gompers is getting into the campaign, is borne out by two facts. First of all, Gompers is again putting only a handful of organizers at the disposal of this campaign. Such tactics are suicidal. At best they are stupid. In this case they are criminal. Secondly, in laying the plans for this campaign, whatever of it will materialize, Gompers is excluding the best fighters of the old strike, Masking his treachery to the interests of the steel workers under the hypocritical guise of an attack on "radicals," Gompers is depriving the unionization drive of the best forces available.

These are exactly the tactics pur-

GENERAL MEETING OF ALL NEW YORK LEAGUES
of the
Trade Union Educational League
to be held
MONDAY, JULY 23rd, 8 P. M.
At Headgear Workers' Lyceum
(Beethoven Hall) 210 E. 5th St.
Speakers:
WILLIAM Z. FOSTER
JOSEPH MANLEY
Admission 10 cents

sued by all the enemies of labor. These are the very words used by the United States Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers in their attacks on Labor. A pint jar cannot hold a quart. With an insufficient number of organizers and the best organizers kept out of the campaign Gompers can do very little for the steel workers.

Our Conclusions

The only way the steel workers can hope to abolish the 12-Hour Day is thru building a powerful union able to settle the score with the United States Steel Corporation and its allies. All workers, particularly the miners and railroaders, must aid in this effort to unionize the steel mills.

It is an irreparable disgrace to the whole American Labor Movement that the 12-Hour Day is still in force in the steel industry. Labor stands helpless, its leaders asleep at the switch and refusing to do anything, while forces outside the Labor Movement, like the Federal Council of Churches, are agitating for the 8-Hour Day.

The steel workers in particular and the other organized workers in general must bring to bear the greatest pressure possible on the officialdom of the American Federation of Labor to get into a unionization campaign heart and soul. Thus only can the 12-Hour Day be ended. No half-way measures will do in a fight with the Steel Trust. The workers must organize for a fight to the finish in order to free themselves from their present slave conditions.

Farm-Labor Unity to be Told New York

A mass meeting to hear the report of the historic gathering held at Chicago, where the Federated Farmer-Labor Party was formed, is being arranged for Tuesday, July 24, 8 p. m., at Webster Hall, 119 E. 11th Street, between 3d and 4th Aves.

C. E. Ruthenberg, secretary, Workers Party; William Z. Foster, secretary, Trade Union Educational League, and J. Louis Engdahl, editor of "The Worker," conspicuous figures at the Chicago Convention, will tell the inspiring story of how 600,000 workers and farmers united in Chicago to build a party of Labor.

Every union man in New York City, who believes in independent working class political action, should attend this meeting.

Already the reactionary daily press, bewildered over the strength and power developed by the gathering at Chicago, are spreading their usual lying propaganda against the newly formed party of the industrial and farm workers.

Come and show your solidarity with the farmers and workers who met in Chicago to organize united resistance against the capitalists and landowners thru united political action. Rally to the mass meeting at Webster Hall on Tuesday, July 24. John J. Ballam, also delegate to the convention, will preside.

Lithuanians for United Action

Five thousand Lithuanians in Greater New York, members of 19 organizations affiliated with the Alliance of Lithuanian Workers' Organizations, at their recent meeting wholeheartedly endorsed the Federated Farmer-Labor Party formed at the recent Chicago Conference. All the local organizations of the alliance are urged to affiliate with the Federated Party. The resolutions adopted declare that:

"We greet this unity between the city workers and the working farmers in their common political struggle against the bourgeoisie.

"We pledge ourselves to do all in our power to support the Federated Farmer-Labor Party and to work unceasingly in our organizations and in the general working masses for the development and extension of the F. F. L. P.

"Long live the unity between the workers and farmers!"
(Signed) Chairman, M. Paukstiene, and Secretary, L. Endziulis.

CLEVELAND, O.—There will be a picnic of Cleveland's youth, under the auspices of the Young Workers' League, at Lee's Grove, Sunday, July 29, with speaking, races, singing and athletics. Take W. 25th St. car to barns, then take Pearl Road car to Brook Park Road.