

Missouri Croppers Win "Stay at Home" With 100% Wage Increase!

Special to LABOR ACTION

SOUTHEAST MISSOURI, June 28—The cotton choppers of Southeast Missouri have won a great victory. After six weeks of exhausting struggle, which was climaxed by a long period of incessant rain, when no chopping could be done at all, the workers around Lilbourn went to work last Thursday for \$2.50 a day with prospects of \$3.00 during the coming days. In Matthews the workers also went to work for \$2.50.

In Parma last week a landlord brought his truck and offered \$2.50 to the whites. They refused to take it. It is certain that next Monday he will be back again offering more, or at least not less than the \$2.50.

At Morehouse last week during the rain a landlord came and offered \$2.50 for a hundred men to go some distance away. He promised a bonus at the end of the season if they stayed with him and worked with him all the time. This is all the guaranteed information that we have so far, but it is clear that the landlords have capitulated to the determination of the workers not to be exploited at the old rates. Wages of \$2.50 represent a 100 per cent increase over the wage paid last year.

What has defeated the landlords is the resistance among certain groups which refused to give way when others, although sympathetic, were straggling back to work. Foremost among these were the Lilbourn projects under the leadership of Local 313, where colored and white remained out for almost five continuous weeks, thus giving an example and inspiration to all the workers around.

At New Madrid also the resistance continued almost without let-down. At Parma, where there was no local organized, the workers remained grimly determined not to go to work until they had received their demands. It is noticeable that in these three areas the whites and the colored worked in great harmony.

In Parma some days ago a scheming landlord offered the whites \$2.50 and the Negroes \$2.25. Both refused. They had struck together and they would go back together.

Wages May Reach \$3.00

That the wages will go actually to \$3.00 for ten hours is the confident hope of some of the leaders. The men have decided to go back to work for \$2.50, but it is reported reliably that in certain areas the landlords were paying \$3.00 and \$2.50 since last week. But in order not to antagonize their fellow landlords with whom they had entered into conspiracy to keep the wages low they kept what they were paying a secret. We are assured also that tractor drivers in many places have been

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Nazi Pogroms Threaten Unarmed Palestine Jews

By ALBERT GATES

As the German Panzer divisions roll across the desert sands of Egypt, threatening to seize its principal cities and overrun the Suez Canal, the extremely dangerous position of the Jewish population of the Near East, particularly Palestine, becomes ever more clear. It does not require a great deal of insight to forecast what a German victory means in that arena of the war.

The German army, accompanied and directed by the Gestapo and the Schutzstaffel, will unleash dreaded pogroms against a defenseless Jewish population. They will undoubtedly seek to incite the Arab tribal chieftains to take out on the Jews their hatred of British colonial policy and practice.

The most pitiful aspect of the entire situation is the fact that the Jewish population is defenseless, i.e., it is unarmed, even to protect itself. If this situation should continue under the conditions described above, a fearful slaughter will take place in Palestine.

The British policy of divide and

rule sought to placate the Jews and the Arabs in the Near East and to maintain control of that area of the world in order to enforce its grip on the profitable oil lands belonging to the colonial peoples.

British Refuse Arms

In pursuit of these aims the British refused to accede to the demand for the formation of a Jewish army made by many supporters of the war in England and in the United States. The Jewish movements which camouflaged special reasons, but all of them are motivated by the desire to obtain a special place in the war for their people.

It is easy to see the purpose. If a Jewish army participates in the war it will give the Palestinian Jews a firmer hold on their adopted country and in general strengthen the Zionist movement in a post-war period. Moreover, such an army, actively fighting in the war, would lay the basis for removing the British mandate over Palestine.

These are some of the reasons behind the refusal of the British to

grant the request for the Jewish army.

The British imperialists are adamant even though it is plain to see that, from the point of view of their IMMEDIATE military interests in Egypt, a Jewish army could have been of incalculable value to the British forces. Such an army might have turned the tide for the British in the Libyan campaign. But the British Tories are concerned with the effects of such an army upon their colonial policy. And the British imperialists are organically incapable of changing in the slightest degree their colonial program: keep the subject peoples unarmed and divided as the surest means of maintaining British imperial rule.

The peril of the Jews in Palestine becomes alarming because it is evident that the British are unable to defend them against the wrath of the fascist barbarians.

Arabs in Danger, Too

The Jews are not alone in their plight. The Arab workers and peasants will find just as little comfort under fascist rule. While they may not suffer such pogroms as the Jewish population, they face the slavery of all conquered countries.

The bankruptcy of British imperialist rule has long been apparent in this war. They merely repeat the practices of Malaya, Singapore and Burma in Egypt and the Near East. These practices spell out the grave dangers to the whole population there, but especially the Jews.

While there is yet time, the Jews and the Arabs must unite to stave off the dangers which threaten them. It is clear that what they require is an independent policy—severance from the blind and reactionary British rulers, severance from their own misleaders who keep them tied to a policy and practice which doom them in advance.

What is needed in the Near East is the independent organization of the workers and peasants, Jews and Arabs alike, in a common struggle for their freedom and independence! What is needed is the arming of the whole population to defend themselves against the conquerors!

LABOR ACTION

JULY 6, 1942

A PAPER IN THE INTERESTS OF LABOR

ONE CENT

REAL PRICES KEEP PIERCING "CEILINGS"

KEEPIN' US FLYIN'



Va. Governor OK's Legal Lynching of Odell Waller

Odell Waller, youthful Negro sharecropper from Virginia, is scheduled to die in the electric chair on Thursday morning, July 2. That is the decision of the "liberal" Democratic governor of Virginia, Colgate Darden, who has refused to grant another commutation of sentence or interfere in any way with the scheduled electrocution.

Waller was convicted by an all-white jury of Southern planters, from which those poor white and Negro sharecroppers who could not pay the poll tax, were systematically excluded. Waller was charged with the murder of his white landlord, Oscar Davis, whom he killed in self-defense when Davis pulled a gun on him for demanding his just share of a crop.

Waller's case has become a cause celebre among trade unions and liberals throughout the nation. He has received the support of Phil Murray, CIO president, and William Green, AFL president. His case has been handled by the Workers Defense League of 112 East 19th Street, New York.

It was without doubt the wave of protests that came into the Virginia governor's office that has saved Waller's life up until now. Governor Darden has received as many as 900 messages a day requesting that a policy and practice which doom them in advance.

His case was brought before the United States Supreme Court with a request that it intervene on the ground that the Virginia trial was unconstitutional since it did not provide a trial by Waller's peers, in view of the fact that non-poll tax payers were excluded. But the Supreme Court, which President Roosevelt was supposed to have

packed with "liberals," did not heed Waller's plea. It was too busy with other things—issuing rulings which emasculated part of the wages and hours law and which cut into the right of free speech.

As a final attempt to prevent the legal lynching of Waller, a petition signed by hundreds of prominent white and Negro liberal and labor leaders has been sent to President Roosevelt appealing for the creation of an executive commission of inquiry to investigate the case.

At the time of writing there has been no word from the President. Those of our readers who see these lines before the scheduled execution of Waller are urged to write or wire

the President urging him to create such a commission.

If Odell Waller dies this Thursday, he will have been a victim of Southern class injustice, a victim of the Jim Crow and poll tax system which never gave him the right to vote and never gave him the right to a jury of his peers. It will be another gross instance of class injustice, the victimization of the poor by the rich.

The case of Waller has assumed a far greater importance than rests in the fate of this one man. It is a crucial test of the workings of our "democracy" during wartime. The Negro people and the militant workers have their eyes glued on the fate of Odell Waller.

Striking Chinese Seamen Win Raises

Since the fall of Hongkong and Singapore, the 30,000 Chinese seamen of Allied ships (especially the British ships), have become increasingly militant against the British shipping companies. Paid the miserable wage of only \$41 a month (including \$25 war risk bonus) and living under conditions of virtual slavery, these seamen are rising to demand higher pay and better working conditions. With no home ports to go to, they are demanding vacations of some duration in the Allied ports.

Recently on the S.S. Cliona in New York, the seamen went on strike. On the second day of the strike, the shipowners offered them an increase of only two pounds sterling a month. The seamen remained on strike. Two days later, in an attempt to starve out the strikers, the captain refused

them food. From New York's Chinatown came food to assist the strikers. Finally, on the seventh day of the strike, the shipping company conceded a raise of seven pounds a month and two months' vacation with pay for the seamen when they docked in London.

Although the wage scale for Chinese seamen still remains far below that of other seamen, this strike is a demonstration of what militant strike action can achieve.

And for 1944?

War Budget for 1941...	\$ 26 billion
War Budget for 1942...	111 billion
War Budget for 1943...	70 billion (so far!)
War Budget for 1944...	? ? ?

There were indications last week that the "price control ceilings" imposed by Leon Henderson's Office of Price Administration were in danger of being pierced by continually rising prices.

The most dramatic indication of this possibility came in the form of an Associated Press dispatch of June 30 which declared that Henderson and Secretary of Agriculture Wickard were preparing to propose vast subsidies to business men as a method of persuading them not to allow their prices to pierce the ceilings. It was estimated that as much as \$300,000,000 to \$400,000,000 was being considered as the sum with which to entice big business to maintain the ceilings.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, however, the cost of living of the American working class was, for the month of April, 1942, the highest since late 1930. The only "subsidies" which THEY are getting this year is in the form of new taxes.

In the meantime, the vast army of consumers—mainly the wives of the American workers—were discovering that, despite the ceilings, prices were rising—slowly but surely. One of the reasons for this price rise is the fact that the OPA has not been provided with an adequate force for the checking of price chisellers—big and small. Thus, the recent congressional action in cutting the OPA budget from \$200,000,000 to \$75,000,000 will further handicap it.

Democratic Control

As a matter of fact, the only way that adequate control could be maintained over prices would be to establish democratically chosen local boards composed of local trade union and consumer groups, which would keep their eyes on prices.

Another, and eventually more serious, reason for the rising price level (even if that rise is for the time being partially hidden) is the fact that big business is discovering the idea of raising prices by lowering the quality or value of a given product, although the nominal price remains the same. Numerous methods have been discovered in order to achieve this aim. For instance, many producers pack their new products somewhat differently and therefore charge higher prices. Many companies are also resorting to the device of pushing one of their brands of a given product which is higher priced instead of a lower priced brand, although both are of the same quality essentially.

Proof of Price Rise

In last week's LABOR ACTION, in Susan Green's column, "Of Special Interest to Women," there was a startling comparison between the prices charged by the A&P Super Markets in March, when the ceilings were first imposed, and the third week of June. The following facts were discovered by our columnist:

In the category of fresh fruits (Continued on page 2)

St. Louis Negroes Protest Jim Crow

Special to LABOR ACTION
ST. LOUIS, June 21—Over 200 Negroes marched in a picket line under the auspices of the local March on Washington Committee which paraded in front of the United States Cartridge Co. plant in protest against its exclusion of Negroes.

The demonstration also protested the discharge of 100 Negro porters last week. Said one of the placards: "Twenty Thousand Workers at Small Arms Plant in Production—Not One Negro."

In order to forestall the Negro protest, the company announced two hours before the demonstration that it was planning an all-Negro production unit within its plant. This announcement was vague as to details.

It was felt here that, while any jobs that might be available for Negro workers would be welcome, it would be an error for Negroes to accept this segregated unit as a victory in their struggle. Only complete equality, without any kind of segregation, should be the aim of the Negro workers.

Chicago Negroes Rally to "March on Washington" Meet

Special to LABOR ACTION

CHICAGO—On Friday, June 26, 11,000 Negro people filled the Coliseum for a meeting held under the auspices of the March on Washington Committee.

The vast audience was in itself an impressive protest against Jim Crow—a protest far more effective than any made by the main speakers.

Walter White, Milton Webster of the FEPC and A. Philip Randolph were the principal speakers. Although all three condemned the injustices Negroes suffer both at home and in the colonies, none of them had anything concrete to offer in terms of plans for mass action.

Playing down mass action, Webster stated that the FEPC was the result of the work of some of the

leading people of the race. He admitted that so far the committee has not been able to do more than scratch the surface of racial discrimination.

Walter White carefully distinguished between the reactionary Southern senators and President Roosevelt. True to his policies, White failed to urge any action on the part of the Negro masses but instead called for "More immediate action on the part of President Roosevelt."

Although Randolph spoke of mass action, he had no concrete plans to offer other than continued protest meetings. The March on Washington was only raised as a vague threat when Randolph stated: "We can still

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