

Nation-wide Strikes Advance. . .

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Summary: Accounts of various strikes around the country, the difficulties of labor organizing, and violence against strikers. (DDLW #275).

Brutal Injuries and Teargas Are Police Answer to Defenceless Women and Child Pickets

‘JURY’ OUT OF DATE

12,000 School Children Are Forced to Scab In Cotton Strike, While California Schools Close

A few highlights in the news of strikes:

The strike of 5,000 employees in the Ford Edgewater, N. J. and Chester, Pa. plants drags on. In a telegram to the NRA, Ford declares that his company has never discriminated “against any applicant for employment on the ground of his affiliation with labor unions or otherwise.” (According to Administrator Johnson on October 27, “Edsel Ford told me they would never accept collective bargaining of any kind.”) In Detroit, the strike of 7,000 die and tool makers threatens to stop the entire auto industry. It will be remembered that a similar strike there last winter actually succeeded, for the first time in the history of American labor, in halting all work in a major industry. The previous strike was led by Communists, and fed by police brutality. An interesting comment on the present labor troubles is that more than 6,000 anti-Ford votes were cast in a recent election in Dearborn, at which the United Front Party, led by the Communist Party, succeeded in nominating its mayoralty candidate and four others in the non-partisan primaries. As we go to press, it is reported that Ford has announced he will be obliged to lay off 9,000 workers a week to conform to the 35-hour week provision of the auto code. Administrator Johnson offered to except the Ford plants from this provision, but Ford failed to reply.

Three striking cotton pickers in California were killed and a score injured, many seriously, by armed growers, apparently abetted by police. The evidence is unanimous that the strikers employed only peaceful picketing along the highways. A score of strikers have been jailed on charges of criminal syndicalism, inciting to riot, etc., in an effort to break the strike. The Federated Press reports that, **12,000 school children in the strike area were forced to act as scabs and pick the crop, the schools closing for two days.**

The cotton growers complained to Secretary Wallace that “the bountiful use of federal funds for welfare relief is making it more pleasant and desirable for labor to accept charity than to work,” and it is now reported that all federal relief to strikers has been withdrawn.

“There is no place in this town for Russian anarchists, cutthroats, Reds and murderers. In some places they take men like these out and hang them. **Don’t be too sure they won’t do it yet, right here.**” These were the law-abiding phrases uttered from the bench by Judge J. H. Solkmore of Lodi, Cal., at a hearing of six organizers arrested during the grape pickers’ strike there. When the defendants asked for a jury trial the judge replied, “The jury system is a relic of mediaeval times, the recourse of guilty men who want to escape justice.”

One man was killed and at least 16 pickets and bystanders seriously wounded, including a small boy struck in the head, when over 200 deputies using guns, clubs and tear- gas swept down the main street of Ambridge, Pa., in an attempt to break the steel strike there. An unusual Pathe newsreel depicting deputies firing into the picket lines resulted in editorials denouncing the action of Ambridge officials even in the conservative New York *Herald Tribune* and *Times*. Said the *Herald Tribune*: “the whole initiative, in this photographic record, comes from the side of the ‘law.’ It is not a pleasant picture, and strongly suggests one reason why Pennsylvania has found it so difficult to maintain industrial order.”

After two weeks of attacks by teargas and clubs of police, used indiscriminately on men, women and children in the picket lines and among onlookers, the strike of the workers of the National Steel Company at Weirton, W. Va., has been broken, and the bosses’ fight for open shops in the steel industry strengthened. E. T. Weir, president of the company, won for himself the pleasant nickname of “Shoot-A-Few” Weir by his remark, “We may have to shoot a few these men to end this strike.”

Nine silk strikers in Patterson, N. J., were shot, three of them seriously, when uniformed police and company thugs fired into the picket line. This is the third month of the silk strike, which now includes over 70,000 workers and has tied up the industry in New Jersey, New York City, Pennsylvania and parts of New England. At a recent hearing before Deputy Administrator Whiteside of the NRA, Ann Burlak, organizer for the National Textile Workers’ Union (Communist), warned that the strike could not be compromised: “We will write the settlement terms on the picket line.”

The coal sections of the country continue restless, as the operators continue opposition to collective bargaining. A general strike of all miners in the northern Pennsylvania hard-coal field was barely prevented by the pleas of President Thomas Maloney of the United Anthracite Miners of Pennsylvania and Rev. J. J. Curran, a Catholic priest of Wilkes-Barre, before a convention of the U. A. M. P. Father Curran openly expressed his sympathy with the miners and with their union. **One delegate showed an unopened pay envelope containing the pay of 1 cent for two weeks work**, due to deductions of \$98.99 for powder, tools, etc. from his “earnings” of \$99. Another delegate told the story of several miners and their request for a mule to drag out rails from an old working place. The boss refused the mule, saying: “You’ll have to do it yourselves, it’s a little dangerous to risk a mule up there . . .” **In the Colorado coal field, the first company union in America, that of John D. Rockefeller in the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, has been doomed** by a vote of 877 to 273 in favor of the United Mine Workers of America. The company had refused to permit the taking of a vote in 1917, and refused to recognize the U. M. W. A. in the strikes of 1919 and 1922, although the men followed the lead of the trade union against the company union.

The Berkshire Mills at Reading, Pa., citadel of open shop interests in the hosiery industry, has been forced to yield to the demands of its workers for collective bargaining after strikes of thousands of organized and unorganized workers.

More than 4,500 silk dress workers walked out in Los Angeles after a strike call was issued by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. More than 40% of the 6,000 workers, it is charged, are receiving less than \$5 a week. This brings the number of California strikers to more than 25,000 including 12,000 cotton pickers, 1,800 sardine fishermen, 2,300 lettuce and tomato field workers and several hundred stevedores.

Martial “law” still reigns at Gallup, N. M., where miners are joining the Communist National Miners Union and deserting the United Mine Workers, the John L. Lewis organization. In the eleventh week of the strike, organizers are being sentenced by court-martial and held in jail under appalling conditions, picketing is forbidden, armed strikebreakers are being deputized to attack strikers.

In the beet fields of Colorado, **where child labor in its worst forms is still the general rule**, the workers are striking in desperation against wages of as little as four cents an hour for a back-breaking day that extends from sunrise to sunset. (For an analysis of the situation in the beet-sugar industry, see the article by Father Gleason in the November 4th issue of *America*.)

The cotton mill strike of 2,100 in New Orleans is broken after police shoot down and arrest scores of strikers . . . In Ashboro, N. C., the striking workers of the Bossong Hosiery Mills win a remarkable victory after a two-week struggle, winning full union recognition and a 25% wage increase . . . The workers of the Willimantic Silk Co. of Willimantic, Conn., win a wage increase in excess of their demands after a nine-week struggle.