

Labor Views

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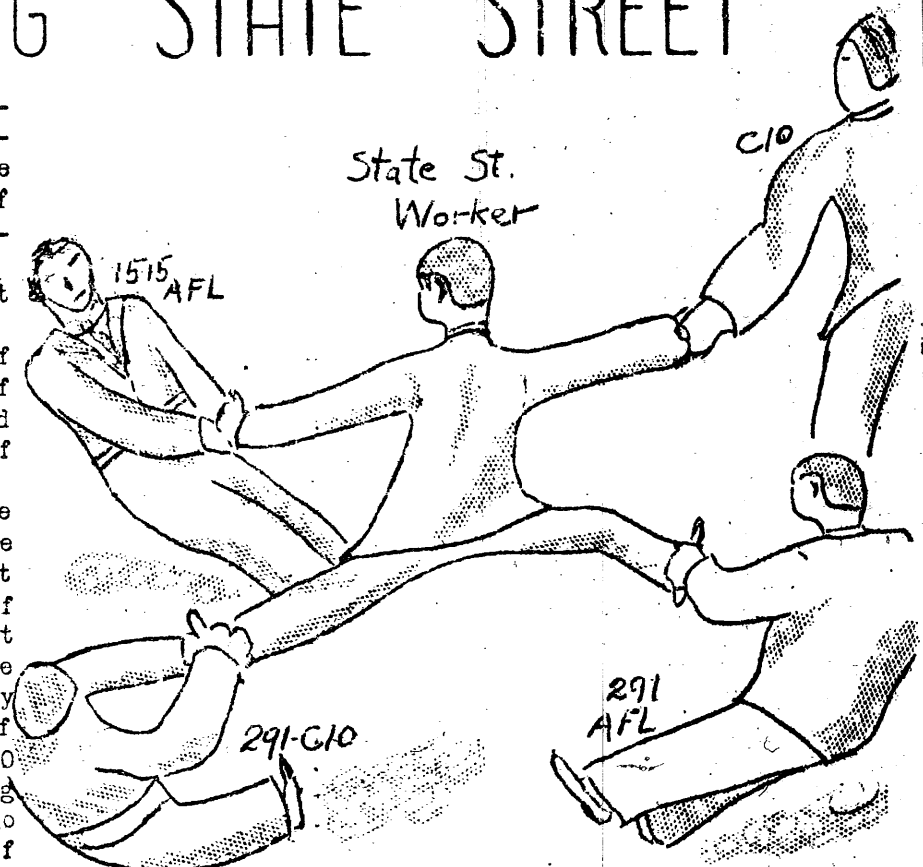
ISSUED BY REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS LEAGUE—CHICAGO SECTION AUG. 10, 1946

ORGANIZING STATE STREET

The story of union organization in the big department stores on State Street is a tale full of intrigue, plots and counterplots, involving AFL, CIO and merchant representatives - all against the background of the glittering wealth of the merchant princes and the grinding poverty of their workers. About 25,000 workers lining the miles of counter space have made the State Street Stores the most opulent of modern bizzarres. Just eight State Street stores have net sales, as estimated by the Chicago Association of Commerce, of \$227,000,000 in 1944, this constituting 61½% of the total Chicago department store sales of \$372,000,000.

Eight Marshall Field employees started the union ball rolling in 1940. Soon having added to their strength they affiliated with Leonard Levy's United Retail Wholesale Department Stores Workers CIO forming Local 291. The Boston Store and the Fair Store workers were rapidly organized into this local.

Meanwhile the Hillman grocery clerks began to chafe under the racketeer rule of Max Caldwell of the Retail Clerk International Protective Association AFL. In '41 these grocery clerks



"UNITY" ON STATE STREET

succeeded in overthrowing Caldwell and they affiliated with Levy's outfit as Hillman Local 329. Later this group was joined by the majority of food demonstrators who too were suffering under Caldwell's goon rule. They were constituted an autonomous unit in Local 329. However, a few of the demonstrators elected to remain in the Caldwell union.

BEGIN REBELLION AGAINST LEVY - WOLCHAK DICTATORSHIP

Then began the confused see - saw of State Street workers from one union to the other. Local unions of the United Retail Wholesale Department Store Employees soon discovered that their national leadership, under Wolchak had deprived them of all autonomy. Funds collected here to page 2.

STATE ST. "UNITY" SPLIT 4 WAYS

(from page 1)

were first sent to New York and then the Chicago share was returned. Written into the Constitution was the stipulation that all the equipment in the Chicago office - even though purchased by the Chicago workers was the property of the National Office. Negotiations of contracts was undertaken by Wolchak or his representatives. As resistance to this bureaucracy developed, Wolchak retaliated by permitting the organization of State Street only in so far as it came under his wing. Resistance increased. Wolchak and his representative Levy attempted to smother the organization drive. No organizers were given, no funds were contributed.

Two years after the Marshall Field workers had set out to organize their store and in turn State Street a group of Marshall Field building service workers led by Martin Heckman bolted the dictatorial rule of Wolchak-Levy and affiliated with the Building Service Employees International AFL. William J. McPetridge, the International President, interested in broadening the sphere of his control, granted Heckman assistance and autonomy. (That McPetridge is no trade union militant is well indicated by his recent appointment to the vice-presidency of the Park Board and his fishing trips with Mayor Kelly.)

Last December 25th, five years after the drive to organize State Street had begun, the Boston Store, Fair store and Marshall Field Warehouse workers convinced that the organization of State Street could not proceed under Wolchak-Levy domination, left the CIO and followed Martin Heckman into the building Service Employees International Union. McPetridge motivated by the lustrous prize of 25,000 organized, dues-paying State Street workers promised Local 291 complete autonomy, five organizers, sufficient funds and all the technical aid needed for such an enterprise. In addition, for the first six months Local 291 was not obliged to pay any per capita tax to the International. To date McPetridge has found it advanta-

HIGHLIGHTS OF STATE ST. STORY

1. 1940 WORKERS BEGIN ORGANIZING INTO CIO.
2. WORKER REBEL AGAINST CIO BUREAUCRACY.
1942 FIELDS JOIN AFL
1945 BOSTON STORE, FAIR AND FIELD WAREHOUSEMEN JOIN AFL
3. 2 AFL UNIONS AND 2 CIO UNIONS BEGIN 4 WAY TUG-OF-WAR WITH WORKERS IN-BETWEEN.
4. STATE STREET MILITANTS LOOKING FOR REAL UNITY - BEGINNING TO SEE NEED TO DETHRONE CIO AND AFL BUREAUCRATS.

geous to hold pretty close to his word.

In the spring of this year Hillman Local 329, threatened with extinction by the bureaucratic hand of Wolchak-Levy joined the parade into the Building Service Employee International.

DRIVE FOR "UNITY" SPLIT FOUR WAYS

Given the assistance, McPetridge promised that the thousands of dissatisfied State Street workers would finally be organized. But the developments this year have revealed that the successful organization of workers requires more than funds equipment, organizers.

What has really happened? Since the split with Wolchak, a struggle has broken out amongst the Executive Board of Local 291 and the organizers of the campaign as to the policies to be adopted. This struggle has had its effects on the drive.

In addition Local 291 still faces competition from the CIO element which has signed up the Lane Bryant store and persists in attempting to win back the workers that have left the CIO. More important than this opposition is the national jurisdictional struggle entered into between McPetridge and the Retail Clerks

(to page 3)

STATE STREET MILITANTS: TAKE OVER YOUR UNIONS

International Protective Association, the Chicago local being 1515 (the old Caldwell outfit). Also from time to time Harry Bridges Warehouse Union has attempted to wedge itself into the situation. The State Street worker is therefore being subject to a barrage of literature from two CIO unions and two AFL unions on the blessings of united action. State Street "unity" has become a Gilbert and Sullivan farce. State Street's crying need is for a militant trade union policy resulting in a unified campaign.

STATE STREET WORKERS
GAIN REAL UNITY

Many of the union members in the various organizations competing for leadership on State Street are beginning to understand that militant trade union policies based on the interest of the worker is more important than the union's Local name or affiliation. They are beginning to know that only militant united effort can victoriously assault this great commercial fortress.

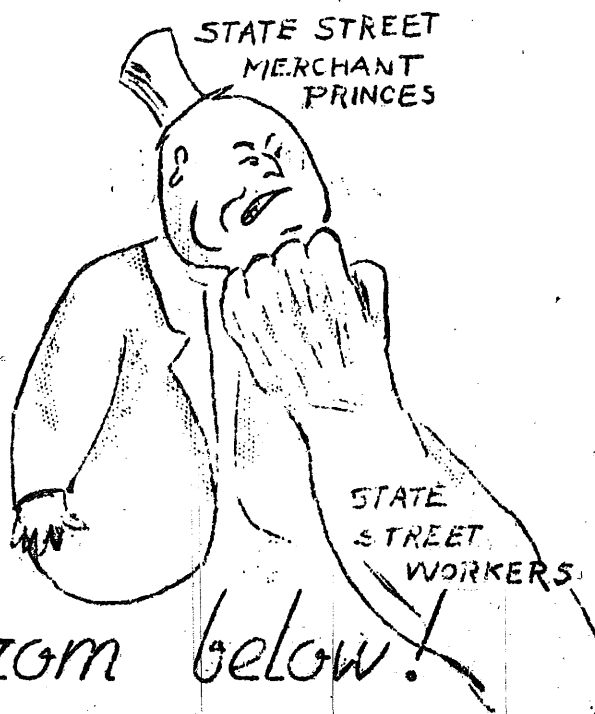
AFL BURECRATS KNOCKING THEMSELVES OUT

Then, a bird's eye view gives us this picture of today's State Street union drive. Local 291 AFL has a contract with the Fair Store, Boston Store and the Warehousemen of Marshall Field. This Local has also filed for elections in the downtown Goldblatt Store, but Local 1515 too has filed for election in all the Goldblatt Stores including the State Street one. 1515 has further confused the issue by filing for the porters, elevator operators and maintenance workers in the Goldblatt stores, all of whom are already working under McPetridge's AFL contract. Food demonstrators who in '41 left 1515 to join Hillman Local 329 CIO and after just having followed 329 back into AFL once again have switched about a week ago, to Local 1515. They explained that they were forced to do this because too many of their girls were thrown out of stores in which 1515 had contracts.

Six years have proven that the present union leaderships are too preoccupied with winning their own spheres of influence and that to them the economic problems of the State Street workers are a secondary consideration.

Such leadership can never organize a unified drive on State Street. For this the leadership must come from below... from a banding together of the militants in all the unions involved in the drive to win control of their organizations. Only then will they be able to turn State Street up-side-down and stamp it with a union label.

While the union leadership engages in a fratricidal struggle which has split the ranks of the State Street workers and retarded their organization, the merchant princes have acted determinedly to stave off unionism. The Goldblatt and Mandel Stores are actually paying better salaries and higher commissions than the stores working under union contracts.



Unified drive from below!

Labor's "Leaders" Silent While MAYOR TELLS NEGROES: "If You Make Too Many Demands You Won't Get Anything."

This was the climax of Mayor Kelly's remarks to the Conference to Combat Terrorism Against Minorities last Monday (Aug. 5) during a mass interview in his office.

The CIO, the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Party representatives present at the meeting remained silent. And the conference has since failed to change its timid legalistic program in "defence" of Negroes.

Led by their spokesman, Henry McGee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, they made a respectful protest to the Mayor and exhibited blissful confidence that this action would protect Negroes from terror attacks.

"There have been 59 attacks against Negro homes in two years", said McGee, "and only four people have been arrested - no one convicted."

Kelly's answer was a rah! rah! defence of the police forces. After all, he said,

they were taking steps to tighten up on all kinds of crime!

McGee tried another polite tack: "We favor that all policemen to be given point blank instructions to "be fair" to Negroes."

"Oh no," said the Mayor, "that wouldn't be diplomatic!" He then related how more tactful instructions were handed down the "chain of command" from the chief of police down to the patrolmen - instructions which side-stepped the whole issue by telling policemen to "be fair to everybody."

At this point the Catholic Labor Alliance representative called for "fuller instructions to the police". Pentergast (someone kept calling him Pentergraft) the commission of police answered for the mayor: "The police read the papers; they are no dumb-bells; they know what they're doing."!!

Then the Chicago Council Against Racial and Religious Discrimination called for
(to page 5)

CHICAGO'S NEGROES — Editorial — REMAIN UNDEFENDED

Rising indignation of Negro and White workers, aware of the mounting wave of terror against Negroes, has so far been climaxed in Chicago by a most shameful demonstration of divided effort and spineless compromise.

The failure of labor "leaders" to take any independent action outside of the Conference to Combat Terror Against Minorities has reduced their action to petty squabbling within the conference and to complete ineffectual action. With half a million CIO members in the area the CIO "leaders" relying on the Chicago Police

to protect Negroes! The most the conference at its Aug. 7th meeting could offer a Negro who asked, "How will I be protected when I move into a white neighborhood next week?" was that it would take a "survey" of the neighborhood.

That the so-called "left-wing" people (the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Party) have subordinated their efforts to this milque-toast conference is indicated by the complete absence of any attack in their press against its opportunist leadership.

South Side Mass Meetings Protest Lynchings

South Side Chicago has been the scene of three mass open-air meetings in the past week in protest against the brutal lynching of four Negroes in Georgia.

The Aug. 2nd meeting on 35th Street and South Parkway sponsored by the National Negro Congress, the Aug. 4th meeting at 51st Street and Prairie sponsored by the National Negro Council, and the Aug. 5th meeting at 45th Street and Cottage Grove sponsored by two ministers each took on its own character. But each time the milling crowds of people showed one common feeling - burning indignation at the increasing wave of persecution against the Negro minority in the United States.

More than 5000 people gathered on the street on Aug. 2nd. Because the National Negro Congress is dominated by the Communist Party of America the speakers were all hand-picked to stay within the "party line". "Liberals" like Herb. March of the packinghouse union and McGee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People gave the crowd their stock answers to the problem of Negro persecution:

"Insist upon an FBI investigation!"

"Pass the anti-lynching bill."

"Urge Congress to refuse to seat Senator Bilbo."

"Defeat Truman at the polls next election unless he 'takes action'."

The real sentiments of the crowd were more often expressed by a few of the local ministers, one of whom cried,

"...complete freedom or death in the attempt to achieve it!"

A tremendous roar of approval arose from the crowd. Taking advantage of these waves of enthusiasm, collection of money and pledges was begun among the people to send a delegation to Washington, D.C.

The Aug. 5th meeting, officially spon-

sored by the Lewis Chapel and Centennial M.B. Churches, continued this collection-taking.

The Aug. 4th meeting featured Edgar G. Brown, director of the National Negro Council. Even though he had a permit, his meeting was denied the use of Washington Park because he was using a sound truck.

Brown used the most vicious anti-white demagogery to collect money from the crowd for a vague lobby program in Washington. Members of the crowd donated, but not once in three hours did the crowd rise with a shout of enthusiasm.

Mayor Tells Negroes...

(from page 4)

"prompt apprehension and prosecution." "Negroes have broken the law too," replied the Mayor.

American Race Relations group called for "an impartial study of land available for homes." Another group asked for a conference of white and Negro people in "tension" areas... Then the Mayor made his quoted remarks:

"...Look here, the least noise you make the better off you are. If you make too many demands you won't get anything." Indeed, the demands were too much! To protect the lives and homes of Negroes is an impossible demand to the Mayor.

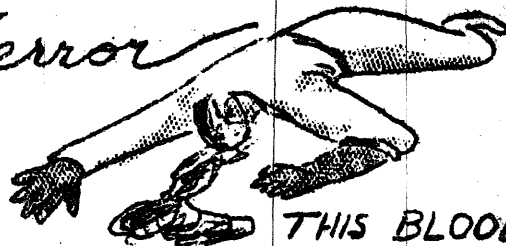
"Well," was the bold reply of spokesman McGee, "I hope you follow through on some of the important notations you've made - Mr. Mayor, your honor, er - May we have a letter to Mr. Truman -".

The Mayor condescended to write a letter introducing some delegates to the White House. Mr. Truman had so far refused to see any Negro delegations protesting the recent brutal lynchings in Georgia.

Where were labor's "leaders" at this conference? Montague, representing the CIO, remained silent! His spokesman, McGee, was speaking. The "left-wing" labor party people, the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Party, they also remained quiet! their spokesman McGee was speaking.

ONLY WORKERS CAN DEFEND NEGROES AGAINST *Terror*

The "liberals" who are so timid in their defence of Negroes here in Chicago are following the same futile line of action in protest against the lynching of Negroes in the South.



**THIS BLOOD
FLOWED FROM EVERY
WORKER'S VEINS**

The facts that one week after the recent murder of two Negro families in Georgia the FBI "discovered" that it could identify but three of the 20 lynchings, and that Truman has refused to see any Negro delegations in protest against government inactivity, are proof enough that no section of the government, national or local, is capable of protecting Negroes from persecution. To put the over-all fact in a nutshell we quote a Negro worker who during a mass meeting shouted:

"Government sure knew how to bring out troops against the railroad men!"

Labor's "left-wingers" - like the Socialist Workers Party - have followed down the same line. The SWP calls upon Truman to take legislative action.

To have Negro and white workers steeped in hatred and fighting each other directly helps the capitalist class to continue its rule over the entire working-

NEGROES UNDEFENDED

(from page 4)

This same group is once again going to appeal to the Chicago police to protect Negroes: States Attorney Touhy is to be asked to appoint a special prosecutor. These same people who had heard Mayor Kelly say, "If you make too many demands you won't get anything!" should have had indelibly printed in their memories the record of corruption, strike-breaking violence, and massacre (Memorial Day Massacre, 1937) of the Chicago Police against the working-class. How can such an organized weapon, used year after year to suppress the working-class, be expected to suddenly become an agency for the protection of Negroes?

Many Negro and white workers who in picket lines have faced the Chicago police homes or areas.

class. Government, which is the chorewoman of this capitalist class, will only attempt to widen the arena of interracial struggle. FEPC, anti-poll tax and such laws merely set government up as the formal umpire in this struggle. Under capitalism the government will always serve the capitalists.

Meanwhile, people serving as agents of capital like Edgar Brown of the National Negro Council stir the races against each other by spewing a program of racial nationalism.

Again, there is only one course of action against the mounting terror against Negroes. This is the organization of an independent united Negro and white workers defence - a defence which will range from local defence squads to the calling of workers to gigantic mass political protest marches across the length of the city and even across the length of the country. know the answer to this question. But the collection of church, civic and college "liberals" who dominate the scene do not.

Negroes will get no protection from Mayor Kelly, Touhy or the Chicago police. When the chips are down in an organized pogrom against Negroes it will be Negroes who will be slugged, shot and jailed by the police. The same hoodlum and police used against Negroes are the scabs and strike-breakers who will be used against all workers - Negro and white.

Only independent workers defence squads spearheaded by thousands of organized workers in Chicago can protect Negroes from terror which is fermenting against them. These defence organizations should be permanently established, ready to move at a moments notice and able to maintain a continuous guard around threatened