

THIS IS YOUR PAPER:

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Labor Views

LOCAL 288 URWA-CIO PREPARES TO STRIKE

"From now on we, the workers here, are going to control our own local union."

"The strike begins now."

These were the keynotes last Thursday as the membership of Local 288 of United Rubber Workers of America (CIO) unanimously approved the militant strike program proposed by their executive board.

Reported the local executive committee: "Mr. Trilling (head of American Industrial Rubber - the plant where 288 spends its time) has told us he will lower our wages before he grants us any raise! You girls making \$3.67½ an hour, do you hear that? He has thrown down the challenge to all of us and we accept it!"

"That's right."

"We accept it."

"We'll get 'im," chorused the membership.

With this battle-cry the workers adopted the following strike program.

1. "Make management hear our demands every day."

The demands:

Wages: Cutters (women) from 67½ to 92½ per hour, press and mill workers from 90¢ to \$1.25 per hour (and similar changes in other classifications.)

Closed shop.

Decent sanitary, toilet conditions.

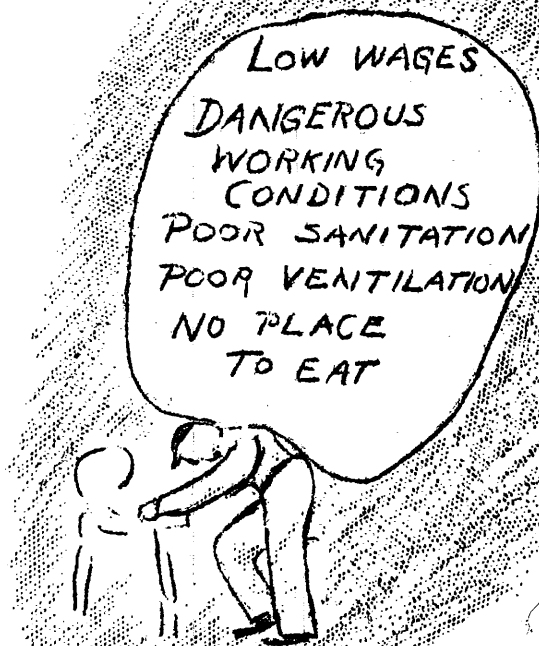
A place to eat.

Guards and safety devices on machines.

Repair dangerous floor conditions.

Proper ventilation and heat.

2. The immediate organization of strike action committees.
3. The collection of special strike funds.
4. The immediate issuance of a strike bulletin to familiarize every one with issues, demands and grievances.
5. A planned appeal to other rubber worker locals for support in their struggle.
6. Increased legal pressure against management.



A Heavy Load to Carry Around in the Shop

"Never before have I seen such a dirty hole to work in," was the comment of a worker-delegate who inspected the Illinois Rubber and Plastics - American Industrial Rubber plant at 4401 S. Sa Salle St. last Wednesday (Sept. 4). He was one of the delegation sent from local 120 of the United Rubber Workers of America (CIO) in support of sister local 288 in its current struggle for better wages and working conditions.

(At a membership meeting local 120 unanimously voted full support for local 288.)

We stepped through one of the big holes in the side of the rubber plant which passos for a door and walked the length (to page 2)

WORKERS CALL RUBBER SHOP "dungeon"

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of the entire plant.

Clouds of gray-white dust billowed into us as we walked into the plant. As we passed from room to room we saw with bits of rubber stock and machinery piled high. We stopped gingerly through the stuff - wherever the cement floor was uncluttered it was cracked. In the millroom a man cursed as the truck he was pushing got stuck. In some spots the cement is broken to powder.

The whole shop floor is at ground level or below. We stopped near a boiler. A shop steward of 288 pointed out the big pool of water that had collected in the pit.

"Sometimes there is too much water on the floor to even work in here," he said. "On top o' that there's such a hell of a leakage into the plant during a heavy rain the floor gets completely flooded. And the drainage is haywire."

One of the workers coughed hoarsely as we passed.

The state safety laws provide that all windows in factories be in good repair. As we walked from one dungeonlike room to another we noticed that this law could mean nothing here, for very few of these rooms had windows.

"Hell-holo", "dungeon", these are the words that slipped out of our mouths as we walked, but I tried to find the one common feeling that seemed to torture the whole place. I found it first as the steward pointed to another old boiler and said,

"This is the one still used for high pressure. Loaks and cracks in it have been welded! Welded mind you! Why isn't it condermed? We don't know when the thing will blow."

We had found the common feeling of the hundred workers in this torture dungeon - fear.

We walked into the men's "shower room" - a crude enclosure with three stalls and

running cold water heated by - live steam! "If a pipe breaks or valve is loose... steam hisses at our naked backs... Were we born for such torture?"

We passed the one open tub with one spigot of cold running water. "The girls (forty of them) wash here."

In the cutting room the women have the best light in the building: modern fluorescent lights glare against the gray stone walls. But the dungeon-atmosphere is not dispelled, for in a prominent position stands the two tiny toilet rooms. Two bowls for the entire 100 or more workers.

"There is no ventilation in those little rooms. When the doors are opened up, the smell..."

We saw the four mills run on belts from a single diesel. One day three months ago a worker at mill...his hand rolled in with the rubber...No safety switch! Four fingers were gone before someone ran the fifty feet to turn off the diesel.

Every worker in the inspection party left this plant with a firm determination to help the workers in this plant win their demands.

LABOR VIEWS is issued by the Chicago Committee of the RWL to further the struggle of the working class against the constant attack of the industrialists and bankers.

We propose independent working-class action beginning at the shops, mines and mills against this ruling-class and its government - its police forces, its courts and laws - operating as its "big stick".

LABOR VIEWS recognizes that although today the working class fights to defend its living standards, tomorrow it will face the task of abolishing this rotting system of capitalist slavery, and create a government which will organize society for the welfare of all who labor. The chief instrument needed for achieving this goal is a Revolutionary Workers Party.

Labor Views SUPPORTS STRUGGLE OF LOCAL 288 URWA-CIO

It is the opinion of Labor Views that workers, driven by the daily oppression of capitalism, want to struggle against their oppressors. It is the tremendous weight of this capitalist oppression plus the vile deceit of the labor bureaucrats which help keep the workers' power scattered, dampened and short of its most full expression.

It is with this spirit that Labor Views heartily endorses the militant action and the program of the local 288 of the URWA-CIO. This militancy is not a sudden growth. It is the result of a gradual awakening of these workers during the two years of their organization. More and more they have flexed the muscles of unity against management; and more and more they know their own power.

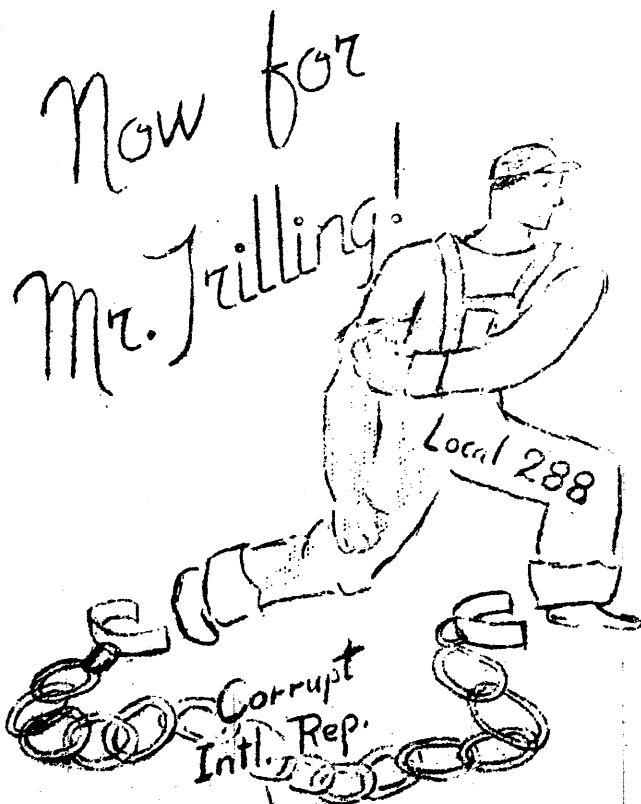
But, the whole struggle of these workers has met every obstacle that a vicious capitalist system can lay down before a worker. Bombarded by working conditions that could crush the spirit out of men and women alike, organized under the hegemony of a union bureaucracy which for two years

has refused to educate a single worker in even the fundamentals of unionism and threatened by the increasing unemployment of workers in Negro communities (overwhelming majority in 288 are Negroes), these workers have dug themselves out of this no-man-land to stage a heroic fight now against a management which has told them to go to hell.

Last February Manson James, International representative, of the Chicago District of URWA-CIO obtained a checkoff for local 288 dues. From that time onward, contrary to the constitution of the Rubber Workers Union, he has collected every cent of the union dues from the company. Last week when workers at the American Industrial Rubber Plant were preparing themselves to strike they discovered that out of \$853 deposited in the bank in the name of their local only \$37.57 remained. Among the cancelled checks for this money spent is a \$200 withdrawal for furniture, fixtures and office rent. The local possesses \$18 worth of furniture. James has had the books of the local up till last Saturday, Sept. 7th.

But James has committed even greater crimes against these workers. Three months ago workers in 288 demanded a payraise in line with the rise in prices. They could get no promise from Mr. Trilling, owner of the rubber plant, and they demanded strike action. Spearheaded by the militants in the press-room the whole shop indignantly walked out. James stepped in after this militancy had developed and negotiated with his buddy, Mr. Trilling. He brought back to the executive board of local 288 a few meager raises which brought the 40 women up to \$3.67½ an hour and the men up to \$3.80 and in rare cases \$3.90 an hour. The executive board refused this insultingly low pay-raise. But James rammed this negotiation down the workers' throats with the cry, "Take this or you won't get anything!"

Even Mr. Trilling was more subtle. He told the workers, "In a few months I promise you another raise." A month ago Mr. Trilling "kept his promise"; when they met with him to reopen the wage clause in (to page 5)



THERE AIN'T NO GRATTITUDE

The US government has filed suit in the US District Court against 13 Chicago trucking companies charging them with breach of contract. When the government broke the Chicago truck drivers' strike of May and June last year the truck companies agreed to pay Uncle Sam's scab drivers the wages normally going to the regular drivers. But these companies have refused to live up to their end of the bargain. \$3,627 is asked for in this suit and 20 more suits are about to be filed soon. Considering Uncle Sam helped these companies in the struggle to beat down their workers, failure to pay is nothing less than the basest ingratitude. A review of the strike makes this as clear as Tavern Pale beer.

On May 17, 1945, 6500 members of the Chicago Truck Drivers Union (independent) went on strike for a 48 hour week and a 25 increase. All the WLB had to offer was a 51 hour week and \$4.08 raise retroactive to January 1st.

The same day a majority of the 2500 members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 705 AFL gathered at Plasterers Hall to decide on joining the strike. With militant spirit they beated down their officers and the reading of telegrams from Secretary of Labor Perkins, WLB and Mayor Kelly all urging them to stay on the job. The call for immediate strike became so insistent that Fred Tiedt local president, in desperation adjourned the meeting.

The next day the WLB ordered the end of the strike and threatened the men with cancellation of their draft deferments and the retroactivity of the \$4.08 raise. The Chicago Truck Operators appealed to Truman to seize their properties. The army assigned 50 trucks and drivers to help out. By this time 500 members of local 705 were estimated to be in the strike.

May 19 already 2000 members of local 705 had joined the 6500 strikers of the CTDU but Henry Berger IBT International Rep. stated, "As far as we are concerned there is no striko."



Two Ways of SAYING "UNCLE"

May 20 the WLB ordered the men back again or else the government would take over. The AFL Teamsters Joint Council 2 told its 10,000 members that the strike was unauthorized and insisted that they return. These bureaucrats were using the excuse that the men did not wait for the 30 day cooling off period provided by the Smith-Connally Act to clapse.

By this time the lukewarm leadership of the CTDU led by President Fonner had called the membership together and asked whether they wanted to return to work. In a standing vote the 3,000 members present rose and roared a defiant "NO!". Two hours later the Teamsters Joint Council announced that its members would deliver the goods and condemned unpatriotic "mob rule".

May 23 military police and army truck drivers were rolling into Chicago from Fort Custer in expectation of Truman's order seizing the truck companies. Fendorgast declared that the police had conducted 88 convoys for trucks running into
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NO GRATITUDE

(from page 4)

the city. The leadership of the CTDU crawled into the LaSalle Hotel and behind closed doors called off the strike just after Truman had ordered the Office of Defense Transportation to operate the 1,500 companies.

The truck drivers gave in then, however they proceeded to certify their case with the NLRB and appealed that the WLB reconsider its offer. On June 15 the WLB refused to alter its proposals and the men of CTDU and local 705 voted to strike again. The ODT immediately seized the trucks and 1,000 infantrymen were ordered into the city.

Ellis G. Longenecker head of the ODT here declared that the army would drive the trucks and asked the companies to turn over the names, ages and addresses of every man who did not perform his normal duties. The threat of drafting the strikers was becoming an actuality. The cowardly traitors leading local 705 announced that they were using every means to urge their men back. The equally spineless Fenner of the CTDU whined, "The strike was futile."

16,117 troops had poured into Chicago by June 25. More than a full division armed with machine guns, submachine guns, rifles, pistols, bayonets and clubs. In "Operation Strikobreaking" they set up positions at the more important truck depots. Jeeps swinging machine guns convoyed trucks in and out of the city down the main arteries. Posters were placed on each truck threatening prosecution against those interfering with its operation. 4,000 GIs were used as drivers and 6000 more escorted these scab drivers and others. To the plea of the trucking companies the government went all out. By June 28th the strike was defeated and answering the back to work call of their fifth column leadership the men dragged to their jobs.

Now in the light of this review, considering the assistance rendered the truck companies thru the WLB, ODT, Truman and the army does it not seem the very limit of ingratitude to refuse to pay the few thousand dollars? After all Uncle Sam did save these companies millions.

Look again at the cartoon in this article. That's exactly the way it is. Uncle Sam treats the trucking companies and the other members of his ruling class family so well they give out with a loving "Uncle". But he offers the workers rotten WLB decisions, draft deferment cancellations, army strikebreakers until they give out with an "uncle" too. But there is a hell of a difference between Uncle and uncle, and that is the secret of capitalist politics.

SUPPORT 288

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their contract and when they pointed out to him that he had not lived up to the contract with respect to working conditions, he replied, "You can stick that contract - - -".

In last years contract Trilling promised to "explore" the possibility of building comfortable eating and rest-room facilities for the workers in the plant. Not one stick has been turned in this direction.

When the workers of 288 looked to James for leadership and discovered that he was acting as Mr. Trilling's agent in their ranks, when they discovered that they had no control over their own workers' organization they wrote to URWA headquarters international in Akron, Ohio. Then they learned another lesson. Akron sent out an investigator who came to Mr. James and slapped him on the wrist. James was instructed to "straighten things out" and prepare to take a new job in the union bureaucracy down in Texas. He has never straightened things out and he is still here.

(Local 120 of URWA learned this same lesson when their executive board wrote a criticism of James and discovered themselves called up on charges before the regional office in Chicago. They too, no longer write to Akron.)

From this time onward the militants in local 288 have carried on a double-edged fight - carrying their demands to management while struggling to gain control of their own local organization. The climax of this struggle is roaring. With the membership of local 288 solidly behind its militant executive board shouting, "Get Trilling, make him cry for mercy!" They are moving forward on the strike program which they adopted last Thursday.

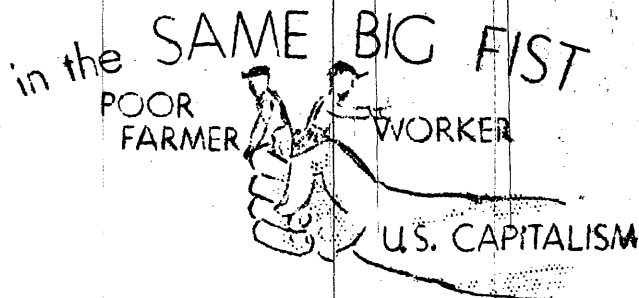
BIG CAPITAL MOVES IN ON POOR SOUTHERN FARMER

US capitalism is faced with the problem of injecting some life-blood into a sick and ailing Southern agricultural economy. This problem is aggravated by the fact that elements of pro-civil war economy exist side by side with finance capital in agriculture.

Up until recently the cotton crop in US was hand-picked by sharecroppers, tenant farmers and wage hands whose conditions are fairly close to the slaves of ancient Egypt. Now the "mechanical pickers", "chopper" and the "flame cultivator" threaten to displace one million families in 16 states. The Dept. of Agriculture also reports the existence of a four row tractor which reduces the amount of labor to 4 or 5 hours per acre, and a mechanical stripper which cuts down labor from 140 to only 7 hours per acre. An average cotton picker picks about 15 lbs. per hour, while his mechanical competitor picks 900 to 1000 lbs. per hour. The average cost of picking a bale by hand is \$32.14, by machine it is \$5.83 (includes amortization and upkeep). With complete mechanization man hours per bale will go down from 150 to 25 or 30. Thus 80% of the people involved in cotton agriculture will no longer be needed.

The foregoing facts can now clearly be understood when it is considered that US production of cotton has gone down from 16 million bales in 1925 to 9 million bales in 1945. Exports have gone down from 8 million bales to 3 million bales in the same period. Despite the fact that the cotton workers make \$13.20 per week (season is 100 days) and \$220 per year, capitalism finds it has to drive the cost of production down in order to compete with British imperialism.

It is estimated that as high as 2,500,000 persons will be dislocated by intensified mechanization. Figures fail to convey the human suffering this will cause. Future mass migrations of agricultural workers toward industrial cities will inevitably be used as a reservoir of cheap labor by big business. This will be held as a club over organized labor by unorganizing capitalism. The additional factor that many of the migrants will be Negroes will be utilized to stir up an anti-Negro phobia in order to divide the ranks of labor.



Faced with these problems the National Farm Labor Union has raised several demands including a guaranteed wage of \$625 (\$14.8) a year for independent farmers, sharecroppers, tenant farmers and wage hands and the reclamation of idle, reclaimed and marginal land. These demands are like tossing a straw to drowning men. Security for the farmer can only be realized in his seizing the land from the bankers in co-operation with the workers who will, for the first time, gain real security by seizing and running the factories i.e. a thoro-going social revolution.

STRIKE PROFITS 00

(FROM "HANK" W.)

So you think this government is an equal representative of labor and industry - read this and weep.

Gwilyn Price, president of Westinghouse Electric Corp. announced recently that while this Corporation lost \$42,920,652 as a result of a strike, it would cost the company only \$341,600. Said Mr. Price, "We are reporting this carry-back as a credit in accordance with the tax law now in effect." In other words, with this law, a corporation may demand a refund due to operating losses - which includes strikes - plus a carry-back based on one-half of the year's excess profits credit!

So the worker on strike now is not only fighting a determined and money-backed organization, he is fighting also an organization backed by a government which guarantees it a profit in their war with low paid workers.

According to a US Employment Service survey the workers average wage today is \$31.00 a week without tax deductions. Yet when this worker goes on strike against the company, the government, this referee with prejudice, guarantees the workers' enemy a profit thruout the struggle. Indeed, the big corporation, can encourage strikes. What can they lose?

So you think the government is an impartial arbitrator - as Lil' Abner would say, "Huh!"