
Activity in Ohio.

[June 1922]

by Caleb Harrison †

A document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 146, l. 188.

“By their deeds you shall know them” may be a trite saying, but it is rich in meaning. The success of the Workers Party depends largely upon the energy and intelligence the membership display in putting our program into action. I reached Neffs, Ohio Sunday to address a meeting. Neffs is a mining town located in the hills of Southern Ohio, near the Ohio River. This is a strange country to those who are accustomed to large towns further north situated along the lines of commerce and travel. I reached Neffs from Bellaire in an autocar riding over the worst road I ever saw. I really didn't see that road; I just felt it, for it bumps so hard one cannot keep his eyes open. Neffs is not a beautiful place — mining towns seldom are — but the country around is good to look at: hills, mostly wooded, and little valleys of fertile soil. Neffs, like all the mining towns hereabout, is an important place industrially, but not commercially. There are no millionaires living here, which might be a blessing were it not for the fact that millionaires are made here. The wealth drawn from the earth by the miners goes to the big cities where the operators live in luxury. The little that remains for the miners is just enough to keep them alive.

Life is uncouth, dull, monotonous in these parts, with a movie show the only means of diversion. Culture is on the same plane as a frontier town — without the freedom of the frontier. Travelling is inconvenient, for most of these towns are on the B&O Railroad. Now the miners are on strike, and the big inter-

est is the outcome of this struggle. We have several branches of the Workers Party in Neffs, but no English branch. The meeting Sunday was advertised by the local and an audience of fifty came. Only a few were American-born. The foreign-born comrades have lost faith in the American workers, but I urged them to remain patient — the American workers do not know the Workers Party yet. In spite of everything the meeting was successful for we sold three subs to *The Worker*, a quantity of literature, and collected \$8.55.

Miners present appreciated the talk so much that I was urged to return on Tuesday and address the meeting of the big local of the Miners' Union. On Tuesday was election of officers, but the miners gathered early, and the President gave me the floor before they went into business. The response to our message to the striking miners was wonderful and the American members seemed the most enthusiastic. In spite of the strike situation they insisted upon taking up a collection as a contribution toward our work. I was given \$5.46 and sold four more subs.

Sunday evening I spoke in Bellaire. There were 80 in the audience at the Miners' Temple. In Bellaire we have a good local of active comrades, many of them are active in the Miners' Union. They usually get large crowds at our meetings, but complained that this time they had not enough time to advertise. Three dollars' worth of literature, 50 copies of *The Worker*, and two subs were sold.

Monday noon I went back into the hills again

†- Caleb Harrison was the first Executive Secretary of the Workers Party of America, elected at the first meeting of the Central Executive Committee in December 1921. Harrison stepped down to make way for C.E. Ruthenberg, newly released from prison in New York, about May 1, 1922, becoming briefly a touring “National Organizer for the WPA, before becoming District Organizer for District 6 [Cleveland] around the first of June 1922. This written report by the new DO was sent out to the WPA's press, DOs, and Federation Bureaus as part of a mailing dated June 28, 1922.

to Fairpoint, a town like Neffs in size and makeup. The miners were to have a meeting that afternoon but gave way to our meeting, which was held in a field down by a creek where a platform is erected for just such purposes. At the appointed time the miners began to come from all directions; men of many races and tongues, unusually serious and earnest I thought they looked, and wondered why. While we waited, boys were playing in the trees overhead, laughing and chattering, totally oblivious to their fathers' serious faces. Over a hundred miners were assembled before the meeting began.

In Fairpoint we have a local of the Workers Party, but as in many places there is no American branch. The American workers recognize that the foreigners are the best union men, but they stood aloof heretofore from political contact with their foreign brothers they held too superior.

But times are changing; the class struggle rages. American miners at that meeting were just as enthusiastic as the foreigners.

At the close of my speech I soon learned why the miners were so serious and thoughtful. At Uniontown, five miles away, a strip mine was opened and twenty scabs were working. A group of National Guardsmen, armed with six machine guns, stand guard over the scabs. At nighttime, powerful searchlights sweep the countryside for miles around, and woe to any unsuspecting person who goes too near that scab mine.

This is enough to make the miners serious; but then on top of that the operators of Clarks on Mine #2 have asked for men to go into the mine to clean it of fallen rock and coal. The miners see in this a trick on the part of the company to get the mine in operation.

They have stoutly refused to go into the mine, holding that this mine was closed by a shutdown ever since last August and the Company never thought of having it cleaned until the strike.

Then into the scene came the organizer of the sub-district, Joe Angelo, who told the miners that according to their contract someone must go in to clean that mine, that the strike would be over in two weeks anyway. He made a threat that if the local would not allow anyone to go in he would order men in and if they refused to obey, or if anyone interfered he would bring a policeman along, have them arrested and thrown out of the union.

In the discussion we had that Monday, the miners learned that they could call Joe Angelo's bluff; and to his assertion that the strike would end in two weeks they would call his attention to John L. Lewis' present efforts to get the railroaders on strike together with the miners.

I took no collection at that meeting but they did want *The Worker*, so I sold 15 subscriptions.

The Workers Party is going to become a factor in these parts.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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