

PA. MINERS DETERMINED TO CONTINUE BATTLE

By F. Forest

BROWNSVILLE, Pa., Jan. 29 — "No contract, no work" took on new significance last week when 4,000 miners met here and decided to strike until a contract was won. These men have been without a contract for 7 months; on a 3-day week for 42 days, and have now been either cut off entirely from credit by the company store or are limited to \$1 a day for the entire family, and miners' families are large. The last straw was the audacity of the coal operators in going to court to force them to work full time without a contract.

The miners said nothing doing, and showed their defiance of both the coal operators and the government trying to utilize the Taft-Hartley Slave Law against their working conditions. Their ranks are unbroken, their morale is

very high and so is their defiance of any and all who try to tell them they are a "monopoly" and have no say over "production."

This has been played up by the capitalist press as a revolt against Lewis. But as one local union official put it, "Hell, if Murray and Green had fought half as hard as Lewis and the CMW there would be no Taft-Hartley Law." Another said, "We are the vanguard of the whole labor movement. We have often been way out front and here we are again. But we know that if we take one single step backward, we will lose everything we have fought so hard to gain over these years."

TILL WE GET CONTRACT

Although it was Sunday, many workers were milling around Moose Hall where the union meets and they were all talking excitedly about the Wednesday meeting of Lewis with the coal operators. "They" — that is how they referred to the coal operators — will know that we are staying out until we get a contract. If you want to call it "pressure," go ahead, said one.

Another said: "The Wednesday meeting doesn't matter, one way or another we will continue to stay out until a contract is won, no matter what." As for Denham, his name is less than mud here and here. "Who the hell does he think he is?" One old militant said. "He has no power whatever against all of us."

Some of the militants around here felt the full weight of the government during the war when William Patterson was imprisoned under the Smith-Connally Act and two others got two-year probation periods. "Wild catting? Hasn't a man a right to work or not to work? Let them then go and dig the coal."

The militant was widely read

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PENNA. MINERS DETERMINED TO CONTINUE THEIR BATTLE

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and the article urging labor to rally to the support of the miners met with approval, and also with skepticism so far as the AFL and the CIO leaders were concerned. "Murray and Green come to our support? Bah! Murray's talk of legal aid is doing us a hell of a lot of good — haven't we got enough lawyers already?"

All eyes are now on the Truman administration and whether it will use the Taft-Hartley Law. But the miners here are staying out of the pits. "If," said one, "the Southern operators get 'smart' and also go to the courts and try to force us to work the full week without a contract, they will find they will have no workers for even a one-day week."

LIBRARY, Pa. — This home of the giant Consolidated Coal Co. has recently had a lot of publicity. A miner by the name of Dickson wrote a letter to the capitalist press, "challenging the dictatorship of Lewis." It was played up by the press all around this region and in the Pittsburgh papers as well.

Dickson claimed to have support of the miners. However, a trip to Library showed that the workers were out 100% and that it was impossible to reach Dickson. The local union said they could not even get hold of him to find out why, where, when.

If then turned out that young Dickson had gotten himself another job before he ever made the statement. Secondly, that he had never been a full-time miner. He is a young vet whose greater part in the army was spent AWOL; this was emphasized by some miners because they felt it may have something to do with the forces that were behind him. He put in a stint at the mines upon his return home, but even when every one else was working full time he'd work only part time and get odd jobs.

One said: "He is sure to talk sooner or later and then we'll find out who backed him and why. But he hasn't got a single man with him here. His own father repudiated him; the older Dickson is a good man and he is sticking with us, and we are all staying out till we get a contract."

The Miners' Wives

By F. Forest

A trip to northern West Virginia, seat of some of the most militant mass picketing of the just-concluded mine strike, reveals that the miners' wives played an important role. This is one of the many facets of the successful mine struggle that the local press dealt with sketchily and the national capitalist press not at all. The most that could be gleaned from the big dailies was that the wives were "taking" the long fight and empty food baskets because they had no choice. In truth, however, the role they played was not a passive but an active one. Here are but a few incidents.

It seems that the union had permitted nump-ters and a few other maintenance men to work for the Pursglove Coal Co. during the strike. The women took a different attitude. They threw up two picket lines, one blocking the road and the other the bridge leading to the tipple. They let only the foreman through. This action on the part of 50 women who took matters into their own hands not only stopped the maintenance men but quickly led the company to "reconsider" its decision to try to have maintenance men.

In Charleston, W. Va., the women joined the picket line of their men. The snobbery of the owner's son particularly aroused their anger. The women pickets stripped his shirt and jabbed hatpins into his shoulders. The "roughing up" of the son of wealth led to arrests but did not stop the women from continuing with their picketing.

The women also took an active role on the question of miners' relief. While the miners appealed to other labor bodies, the wives went door to

door in their own and surrounding communities, and then they helped decorate the hall, meet delegations of O.A.W. and other workers who had displayed their labor solidarity by contributing to miners' relief, and aided in the distribution of the food to the most needy families.

Precisely because the role of the women was an active one it was inevitable that it should lead to organization. In Beckley, W. Va., the women decided to back up their husbands in the fight for a contract by organizing themselves into a Women's Auxiliary. They formed this organization "to help miners at all times, particularly during strikes." Mrs. Haynes Hayworth, wife of the treasurer of the U.M.W. local at Amigo, and organizer of this women's auxiliary, was asked what the wives would do if their husbands decided to go back to work without a contract.

"Then," she answered quickly, "they'd have to do the housework too. They will have to build fires, cook their own food, wash their own clothes, clean the house and hire baby sitters to take care of the children while they are in the mines."

But there was never any question at all, except in the minds of capitalist reporters, of the miners returning to work without a contract. The miners themselves not only fought against the coal barons, they also welcomed the action of their wives. One miner said: "Our wives are right. We can't work on empty stomachs. And we won't work without a contract."

These actions on the part of the women will be sure to leave their mark on the community as a whole.

Auto Union Relief Caravan Hailed in Coal Mining Town

By F. Forest

PURSGLOVE, W. Va., March 6 — There was jubilation in Pursglove today. Willis Massey, chairman of the Miners Relief Committee, got word from Tommy Thompson, president of UAW Ford Local 600, that a food caravan from Detroit auto workers was on its way to West Virginia miners. Immediately Massey, "Happy" Conduck, Joe Kuhu and their wives left to intercept the food truck at Washington, Pa., and escort it into West Virginia.

At the same time other UMW members began to decorate Dallas Hall to welcome this food relief from their fellow workers. The West Virginia University Students for Miners Relief offered to paint the signs. These were ready when the caravan arrived, and read: "Welcome Food Caravan," "United Labor Can Lick the Taft-Hartley Law," "UMW and UAW Fight Together," "UMW District 31 Miners Greet Brother Thompson, President UAW Local 600." Meanwhile, word spread quickly in "The Run" and 100 miners and their wives filled into the hall.

Tommy Thompson had to return to Detroit immediately but three UAW committeemen, Archie Occasia, Joe Hogan and William Hood, remained to celebrate with the miners.

GIVE THANKS

When the meeting was called to order, the miners elected Joe Hogan as chairman of the meeting. The first to speak was Archie Occasia. He spoke of labor solidarity "not only of the miners and the auto workers, but of the whole laboring class. There is need for the whole laboring class to stick together. If you hurt my brother, you hurt me. If the operators had beaten the UMW, it would have destroyed all organized labor since the UMW is the strongest union in our country."

When miners cheered the 12 tons of food that the auto workers had sent and a check for \$1,000 from UAW Local 600, and another for \$333 from Local 155, Joe Hogan rose to say that the auto workers didn't come "to get thanks from the miners, but to GIVE thanks to the miners for their splendid fight" which had helped not only themselves but the whole labor movement.

The spirit of labor solidarity rode high and finally Willis Massey rose to thank the auto work-

ers and to say what he as a miner felt won the fight. He distinguished between "institutional and spiritual union."

THE UNION SPIRIT

"It is true," he continued, "that the treasury, the building and all worldly goods that the union possesses could be confiscated by a Taft-Hartley government. But what they cannot confiscate is our spiritual union. And that is because the spirit of unionism and labor solidarity is not only in us as a group but is in every individual miner. What is in the soul of every miner no one can take away, no one can break. He closed by stressing the labor solidarity evident here in the help of the auto workers. "Our victory shows what can be done when we fight together."

The audience cheered. The morale of these miners who had just won their contract fight against the operators was raised higher by the display of labor solidarity. They cheered the representatives of the auto workers and took them on a tour of the mining community. There were no bands and no fanfare, just simple showing of worker to worker of where and how they live and of the why of their constant struggle against the greedy operators. The auto workers will have a story to take back to their fellow workers in Detroit which will cement the labor solidarity of the two great bodies of organized labor.

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Walkout Closes Steel Company's Homestead Plant

By F. Forest

HOMESTEAD, Pa., April 21 — The Homestead Works, the largest U. S. Steel Mill, came to a complete standstill yesterday. The full working force of 8,500 responded to the spontaneous walk-out of 300 maintenance men and refused to cross their picket line. This was the first time since the great power strike in 1946 that the Homestead steel workers came out in an unauthorized strike.

The capitalist press calls it a "wildcat strike" and the workers call it a "holiday."

Here is what caused it: Ever since the end of last year's general steel strike many men have not gotten back their jobs, although production is at full speed. Other men work only 3 or 4 days a week, and the terrific speedup is "sweating" the men beyond endurance. Literally hundreds of grievances are not only being acted upon, but are not even being considered. Fairless of the giant U. S. Steel has proposed to process these in haphazard fashion, but nothing has moved.

At Homestead there has been doubling up of most jobs, and the non-production workers are feeling the brunt of it too. For example, where formerly the Homestead mills utilized 15 trucks, they now utilize only two. Garbage which used to be hauled daily is hauled now only once a week. And when the men take their vacation, no one does their work for them; when they return, the work is piled so high they cannot get out from under. This has hit the maintenance men particularly for the production workers in Homestead do work a full week while most of the maintenance men work either 3 or 4 days a week.

"REVENGEFUL SPEEDUP"

Considerable dissatisfaction among the men started the day after the end of last year's strike when they began to complain of what they call "revengeful speed-up." Then the first week they got their pay envelopes they found that there had been a decrease in their take-home pay because the union had not gotten a wage increase and part of the social insurance fund came out of their own pockets. In addition to this grievance were the debts they accumulated during the strike and the reduced work week.

So the men began to ask their union to take a more aggressive stand on the grievances. They were fed up with the phrase "the company and the union see no need for alarm in the number of grievances."

The members of United Steelworkers Local 1377 decided to place some matters into their own hands by putting a priority on the demand of their maintenance men for a full work week. The company took an evasive attitude:

"The grievance will be considered in due course." It haughtily added the men could take it or leave it, but the company would not budge from its position.

UNANIMOUS VOTE

An emergency meeting of the Homestead local was then called and the men voted unanimously to take a holiday to enforce (1) the demand for a full work week, and (2) the priority of this grievance. Early in the morning, before the first shift came to work, the maintenance men showed up at the gates well organized.

Although it was a holiday, each had his picket sign, and the picket captains were in their cars speaking through a loud speaker explaining their holiday to the production workers. Thousands of workers lined around the loud speaker, but not a single one tried to cross the picket line, and even the supervisory personnel kept a distance away from the entrance.

In truth, the manner in which this spontaneous walkout was organized lends an added significance to this strike. Both in militancy and effectiveness of organization it was superior to the general strike of last year. Instead of two or three token pickets, which was all they had then, there was mass picketing now. Coffee was being served, and the morale was very high.

When some reporters tried to provoke them by asking them why they were "wild-cating" when Philip Murray had not authorized it, they smiled back: "Of course Murray had nothing to do with it. No one knew anything about it but the local itself unanimously decided to take a holiday until the company sees that we mean either to work five days or none."

One added: "This isn't a strike; a man can still take a holiday when he has a mind to. No one can make you work when you don't want to."

It was clear that they did not feel "ashamed" that Murray had not authorized the work stoppage; on the contrary, they took pride in that fact. What, indeed, had been done to settle grievances by Fairless or Murray? This was their way of showing "the company and the union" that the men themselves mean to do something.

Today it is announced that the company has consented to take up the grievance of the maintenance men first. The men have returned to work, but are on the alert that it should not only be taken up first but settled to their satisfaction.

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by E. Forest

PITTSBURGH, Pa.--November 10, 1950. The nation-wide communication workers strike against the Bell Telephone System took on very militant proportion here yesterday when 5 strikers were arrested for "inciting to riot". Since they had participated in nothing more riotous than militant picketing they had to be released. The massing of policemen in front of all entrances of the Telephone Building plus mounted police all around the building and a patrol wagon on the corner all ready for further "trouble" failed to dampen the spirits of the strikers, who in the main are young veterans.

A bright element in the strike was the help these young workers were getting from their fellow-workers, the long-distance telephone operators who were not on strike, but who refused to cross the picket line. Instead, they formed a cheering line, chanting: "Hold that line!" The girls "with a smile in their voices" showed their voices to be even more effective in this new role to keep scabs from crossing the line. In addition to their lusty lung power, the girls were armed with hat pins--or so the scabs complained. When the cops told them "to get back" and "stop congregating", they said: "We're not congregating--we're just observing." Neither the provo-

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ocations of the cops nor the drizzling rain broke up this cheering section. One girl said the rain might "take the curl out of our hair, but it won't dampen our spirits." Another said: "We'd be cutting our throats if we crossed the picket lines. We girls belong to the same union." Still a third one, no more than twenty years old, said, "I'm overworked and underpaid. After two years' service I am getting \$39 a week for/long distance line from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. working the

Although technically directed against the manufacturing and installation arm of the telephone system, the Western Electric Co., the union emphasized that the strike was aimed at the entire Bell System. John F. Shaffer, Pittsburgh divisional president of the CWA-CIO: "I'd like to debate the strike issues, the wage contract dispute and the Bell System's arrogant anti-labor union policy with any one in the Bell system or its affiliates may nominate. They haven't the guts to do that for it would let the public see what is going on. The A. T. & T. and the entire Bell System has nothing but the utmost contempt for its employes and all of organized labor."

The Company claims that its service is "almost normal" since the supervisory personnel handle the long-distance calls. The

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union not only denies that, but points out that the question of the supervisory personnel is one of its grievances. A CWA-CIO spokesman said: "A Federal investigation should be made into this phone company practice of employing one supervisor to every five employees. They keep the supervisors around to be used as strike-breakers."

The morale of the strikers is very high. In addition to the mass picketing they have introduced a new element of surprise. They withdraw picket lines at some exchanges to concentrate them at others. Thus they keep the management guessing where extra supervisor forces are needed to man switchboards. Another new important phase of this strike is that in addition to asking for a substantial wage increase and better working conditions, they refuse to sign a two year contract. They are asking for a one year contract only. They feel that to sign a contract for a longer period would tie their hands in face of a rapidly changing and inflationary situation. Some of the workers on the picket emphasized that point to the exclusion of the others: "One year contract is sufficient. We should be free to act as we see fit after that."