

The Kentucky Strike--Our Mistakes and Their Correction

By TOM JOHNSON
PART II

RELATIVELY few Negroes are involved in the present strike struggle. Yet, here in the South, particularly, the Negro question is an issue of paramount importance IN EVERY STRUGGLE. In this strike we have an opportunity to bring forward our position in the course of the struggle in a bold and clear manner. It has been done only in an abstract way. We have not formulated any specific and concrete demands for these Negro workers involved in the strike. We have failed completely to draw into the leadership Negro comrades.

In consequence the number of Negroes who have returned to work is out of all proportion to the number involved in the strike.

Our failure to bring forward sharply the revolutionary program of our Party and Union on the Negro question certainly constitutes an opportunistic retreat before the chauvinistic tendencies of the Southern white workers. Our leadership in the strike has failed to place this issue squarely and boldly before the masses of strikers, explaining to them the necessity for the closest solidarity of white and Negro and the methods for its achievement. It is necessary to correct this major error without further loss of time.

Broaden Struggle.

We have not sufficiently broadened out the struggle in the strike area, that is, to include workers other than miners. In those few instances where a real effort has been made to collect relief among the poor farmers, their response to our program, and their support of the strike, has been splendid. We must take steps to bring the present struggle to the attention of the whole working class and the poor farmers of the South, to draw them into support of the struggle through relief and defense activity and to finally win them for our movement.

Corresponding with this failure to broaden out our activities is the failure of our mass auxiliary organizations to secure a foothold in the course of the strike. The International Labor Defense has been completely absent from the strike area. Despite repeated appeals and requests from comrades in the field, no organizer has arrived in the strike zone at this writing. For the first six weeks of the strike not a single Labor Defender or other agitational material of the International Labor Defense came into the strike area. The I.L.D. simply isn't to be found.

A notable exception to our weaknesses in failing to use the strike to reach out, influence and organize for struggle workers other than miners is the situation in Knoxville. There, with comparatively little effort, we have succeeded in developing a real mass movement among the unemployed which is now beginning to take firm organizational shape. We are in contact with the textile workers in some of the biggest mills in the South and the basis has been laid for the organization of Grievance Committees in these mills. We have also organized one unit of the Party in Knoxville.

In no strike led by our revolutionary unions has the politicalization of the struggle as a means of strengthening the strike assumed such importance as in the Kentucky strike.

Respect for the "law" and "legal procedure" generally, is deeply rooted in the Southern working class. This is particularly true in Kentucky. Hence, the necessity, if our strike is not to be broken by a combination of stark terror and demagoguery on the part of the state, county and city authorities, for a thorough going exposure of the class character of the state power from top to bottom.

In the present struggle we have had not one, but dozens of instances in which individual strikers, including members of our Central Strike Executive Committee, have appealed to county sheriffs for warrants against the operators, against gun thugs and against professional strike breakers imported by the coal companies. This went so far that on one occasion strikers came to the general relief warehouse and found posted on its doors a notice signed by the chief of police of Pineville to the effect that only members of the relief committee would be admitted. The notice was written and posted at the request of comrades from the relief committee.

On the other hand, in no strike in my experience, have the full forces of the government been used so openly and brazenly to break the strike, thereby facilitating the exposure to the workers of the class character of the govern-

ment.

The theory of "the lesser evil" plays a considerable role here. Thousands of strikers will declare that the present authorities are strike-breakers, but still look forward hopefully to a change of administration after the next election. It is necessary now to find the ways and means to expose the government as a whole, and to carry on relentless struggle against any manifestations of this theory.

This means not only the systematic exposure of every strike-breaking activity of every state and county official, but also the daily driving home of the fact that the government is not a strike-breaker because of the people who are in office, but rather that these people act as strike-breakers because they are part of the capitalist government.

What the failure to bring forward our Party has cost us in the politicalization of the struggle will be dealt with later.

Popularize Demands.

While on the one hand we have failed to sufficiently politicalize the struggle, on the other hand we have failed to sufficiently popularize the demands of the strike. Particularly at the present stage of the struggle where partial settlements are already the order of the day, it is necessary to carry on a most widespread discussion involving every striker on the demands and aims of the strike. In all our agitation and in every mass action in the struggle, the fundamental demands of the strikers must be brought forward.

Mass Activities.

Due largely to the extreme terror, the deep-rooted tradition of individual action among the Kentucky miners and the lack of adequate leadership in the field, we have failed to develop, with the exception of half a dozen notable instances, mass activities in the strike. Since the first days of the strike there have been no real mass picket lines, no real mass marches involving hundreds of miners on the working mines. At the same time, we have failed even more completely to draw the women and children into mass activity and to break down shy resistance to their participation in strike activities.

There has even appeared tendencies in the

leadership to discourage mass activity. At a time when 5,000 to 8,000 workers were marching every day or two on the county jail to demonstrate at the preliminary hearings of our arrested comrades, our comrades in jail deliberately discouraged such demonstrations, holding that to continue them would "interfere with mass picket lines!"

There has been an entirely insufficient ideological campaign against tendencies towards individual terrorism. Almost no attention has been paid to the organization of mass defense groups and action. As the struggle continues, the danger of individual terroristic actions will greatly increase and will become a very real danger to the strike. It is necessary to smash this tendency now and to explain clearly and simply our tactics of mass defense. It is even more necessary to insure the actual organization and proper functioning of defense groups.

Resulting directly from our failure to involve the masses of strikers in strike activities, is the relatively narrow leadership of the strike. The initiative and instinct for organization inherent in the masses has not been released. The leadership remains a narrow cadre of leading people with the masses of strikers inactive. The local strike committees, relief committees, defense committees, are altogether too small and too narrow in character.

Here it is necessary to say a word about the whole question of united front tactics as employed in the Kentucky strike. I think it is safe to say that not a single Kentucky miner thoroughly understands just what our united front tactic is and how it is to be applied. The result is that strikers not members of the National Miners' Union, and rank and file strikers who are active workers but still members of the United Mine Workers of America, are not drawn into the leadership of the strike, are not drawn into the day to day strike activities.

Almost without exception, strike committees and other leading organs of the struggle are made up exclusively of N. M. U. members. The dangers of this course are obvious. The responsibility for it rests not on the shoulders of our Kentucky comrades, but on the shoulders of our more experienced comrades in the field who have not sufficiently explained the basis and necessity for building a firm united front of organized and unorganized.

(To be Concluded.)

New Tortures for the Workers--Inflation, Taxes, "Anti-Hoarding"

By HARRY GANNES.

II.

In the meantime, the especially severe crisis on the railroads, with the drop in railroad securities, brought about a very difficult financial problem for the capitalists. Railroad securities, amounting nominally to \$25,000,000,000 are the financial foundation for the leading insurance companies and financial trusts (a new form of financial swindling institutions developed during the past period of "prosperity"). The drop in the values of these securities threatened bankruptcy for the insurance companies. The insurance companies, likewise, are large holders of farm and city mortgages. The value of these mortgages has dropped over \$10,000,000,000, according to the American Investment Bankers Association.

Bankruptcies Pile Up.

Tens of thousands of small business men went into bankruptcy, being unable to pay their bills. This made it difficult for many industrial capitalists to pay their obligations to the banks. The banks were filled with worthless paper, creating what the capitalists call a "frozen" condition of credit.

Hundreds of thousands of farmers, facing bankruptcy, were not able to pay the hundreds of millions they owed on their mortgages, and for farm machinery, driving the agrarian banks into bankruptcy, putting a tremendous strain on larger banks with which these smaller banks were connected.

Along with this development went another phase of the credit crisis, bringing about the present severe financial crisis with all its aspects of inflation and greater burdens for the

workers.

The collapse of the greatest portion of the credit and the bank crashes led to hoarding of money. The petty-bourgeoisie began to transform their securities into ready cash. A process of "liquidation" began—that is, a process of the banks, industries, speculators, business men of all types, attempting to transfer their stocks and bonds into cash. In order to get the cash, they had to sell their paper securities at whatever they could get. This led to the repeated stock market crashes. The money they obtained was not returned to the banks, in most instances, because the banks proved to be "unsafe." The workers, seeing their savings being wiped out, began to withdraw their last few pennies from the banks. There resulted widespread hoarding amounting to about \$1,500,000,000.

Government Spends—For Big Capitalists.

Another phase contributed to this financial crisis. The economic crisis, contracting all business activity, throwing 12,000,000 workers on the streets to starve, slashing wages of the entire working class, cut down government income, at a time when the imperialist government was increasing its expenditures especially for war preparations. The development of the credit crisis also required greater government expenditures in the interest of the big bourgeoisie—the Federal Farm Board (to preserve the billions the financiers held in farm mortgages); the \$2,000,000,000 Finance (Reconstruction Corporation, to pay dividends on railroad securities and save the interests of the big insurance companies, the financial trusts, and the leading banks.

The result was a government hoarding of