

millions of human beings. Europe is still in the midst of the struggle against hunger and disease which capitalist imperialism brought upon it, but the forces are already at work to create another such cataclysm.

In his recent book on the Russian Revolution, Henry Noel Brailsford summarizes what happened in Russia as follows:

The Communist Revolution in Russia was, to my thinking, the desperate effort of a society in the last stage of dissolution and despair to reconstruct itself upon a new foundation. Its motive force was the social force of self-preservation which asserted itself with growing strength as the early phase of wreckage and struggle was outlived.

It was the suffering which the imperialist war brought upon the Russian workers which compelled them to act for their own self-preservation. In a great part of the remainder of Europe the question whether capitalism can temporarily reconstruct itself or whether the workers will be compelled to adopt the same mode of self-preservation is still a doubtful one. Another imperialist war will bring the workers of the United States face to face with that same problem. The present policies of the Harding Administration lead directly to that situation.

Letters from the Mine Workers' Convention

By EARL R. BROWDER

Indianapolis, Ind., Sept. 20, 1921.

The convention of the greatest labor union of America has just been called to order. Over 500,000 men, who operate one of the basic industries of America, are members of this union. The convention is the leading organ of these men. The potential power existing in the gathering of delegates in Tomlinson Hall this morning is immense, beyond calculation. More than 500,000 members, united in over two thousand local unions, are represented by something more than 1,500 delegates. These delegates are supposed to be elected from the local unions, to be regularly attending members of these locals, and to be actual working miners. And most of them are.

To one acquainted with the actual membership of the United Mine Workers, however, it is plain that there has been some selective principle at work other than the selection by the men of their natural leaders. What makes this body of delegates so different from a local union? A little examination makes it clear. The delegates here look uniformly "American." The great mass of foreign-born miners are not represented here according to their numbers in the local unions. I asked one foreign-born delegate, a Pole, to explain this to me. He said, "The Americans will not listen to a foreign worker. It makes no difference if we put up the good ideas. If one speaks with an accent, then one is not heard. So the

foreign-born delegates are only from those locals where one race is in a great majority, and they will not try to talk in the Convention. They know from experience that they would not be heard."

It is plain that the administration of the United Mine Workers, including this great national Convention, is thoroughly "American"; and in order to emphasize this point, the hall is draped with a mass of national flags. The "red, white and blue" is flung from every side. And the proceedings are also "American." It is impossible to imagine a labor congress in Europe starting out in the smooth, placid, Sunday-school atmosphere that prevails. Everything seems far removed from the class-struggle. Even the rank-and-file delegates (and the vast majority really are such) are in their "Sunday best," and on their good behavior. The presiding officers are splendid examples of sleek, well-fed respectability. A super-annuated clergyman makes a formal request to the Deity to bestow his blessings upon the gathering.

But we soon get an intimation that all will not be so placid. Through all the speeches of welcome, opening addresses and formal felicitations, through all the inevitable fol-de-rol of an American labor Convention just beginning its session, runs a thread of cautious reference to unmentionable things. Gradually it comes more and more to the foreground. The honorable mayor of the city makes a star-spangled appeal to the patriotism of the convention in his speech of welcome. He mentions incidentally that while there may be a few little things wrong in this glorious country—he is not prepared to deny that a few irregularities have occurred in West Virginia—yet under the great and glorious constitution, etc., etc.

Finally the great and mighty ones of the State and Church are gone. Reports are the order of the day, a report on "Rules and Order of Business." Suddenly the suave, soft-voiced, well-groomed, smooth-running progress of events is interrupted. A high, strained voice calls out "Mr. Chairman!" It is a voice from the mines. In the order of business is "Report of Scale Committee." The voice from the floor demands that the Scale Committee shall be instructed to present its report by the tenth day of the convention. The motion is seconded. The convention is immediately alive. The first clash has come. One of the floor leaders of the administration attempts to have the motion tabled. He is voted down in a great roar. He then talks against the motion. Three delegates from the floor speak briefly for the motion. They had experience at the last convention with the Scale Committee. This time they are determined to know what they are doing before any of them have to go home. They want to know where they stand. They, the delegates, have nothing to conceal. They hope that the Scale Committee has not.

The motion is carried by an immense majority.

So there is some dynamic force beneath the exterior of this smoothly running machine. It growls again, and peeps forth once or twice during President Lewis's report. Anything that smacks in the least of defiance to the

dark forces against which the miners are struggling gets an immediate response. But as a whole the report stirs them little. It is not militant; it is so damned polite and utterly bourgeois. But through it all runs the same story: here, there, everywhere, the miners are in conflict with the machinery of the *State*. In West Virginia and in Alabama they are being murdered, in Kansas they are being jailed, in Washington they are being betrayed and "injunctioned." The "great and glorious" constitution, they are told by Lewis, makes their dream of nationalization of the mines an impracticable Utopia. The immense sums of money raised since the last Convention, more than \$7,000,000, have all gone for lawyers' fees, court costs, strike relief, etc., etc. Judgments for tremendous amounts in damages have been assessed against them by the courts. Unemployment has hit the mines very heavily. Hundreds of miners are in jail under indictments for murder. Through it all, and behind all, looms ominously—the capitalist Government!

There are forces here in Indianapolis! Blindly stirring! One feels them vaguely. Officials speak cautiously, so as not to disturb the beast. A splendidly equipped organization machine is running here to keep it within bounds. Plans are gradually being disclosed to prevent its energies from being unleashed, but every official seems to know that it must not be crossed. This Convention must be cajoled, coaxed, pleaded with, but not defied, nor bullied. The only coercion will be the threat of the power of the Government. The power of the Government, there it is, threateningly in the background of every act of the Convention! Whether anything will develop—well, that is another question. Perhaps, but we will not prophesy. It is enough to observe.

PLANTING THE GUNS

Indianapolis, Ind., Sept. 21, 1921.

Some things emerge from the routine of reports. Lewis and his Administration expect to keep this convention from doing anything about the contract that expires next March. They expect to refer everything pertaining to the coming great struggle to a "reconvened" convention to be called next February. The smooth-spoken president of the Miners' Union has denounced Alexander Howat and Robert Harlin and opened his fight upon them. Green has put forth the policy of the officialdom—complete submission to any orders from the Government, negotiation as the basis for all national policies on wages and conditions. Very, very carefully the ground is being prepared for the official acceptance of the wage-cuts that will be demanded by the mine operators next spring.

Some interesting figures were given out to-day regarding the strength of the Miners' Union. The membership is the highest in history, being actually about 550,000, with an average number paying dues for the year of 442,057. Over \$3,000,000 was expended in strike aid. The Alabama strike cost over \$1,770,000 for relief, attorneys, publicity, etc., and the general financial condition of the International is at a low state. Membership is, however,

at its highest, new locals are being organized, and the miners seem to be unusually militant.

The big events of this Convention are yet in the dim unknown. What will this great mass of unorganized, un-directed delegates do? No one knows, least of all the eminent gentlemen who now direct the course of events. Yesterday Lewis told the delegates that nationalization of the mines is "practically an impossibility under our present constitution." Today the delegation from district No. 2, under the leadership of John Brophy, distributed pamphlets containing an impassioned demand for "nationalization." But it will be hard to get up a big fight on this. Howat has not arrived at the convention. One hears his name often. The delegates are patiently listening to reports. They are waiting.

LEWIS AND HOWAT—AND THE GOVERNMENT

Indianapolis, Ind., Sept. 23, 1921.

"For God's sake, have some respect for your President!" pleaded the chairman, Vice-President Murray, when three-fourths of the assembled delegates seemed determined to hear no more from Lewis. Lewis was attacking Alexander Howat, and expounding his own views of what a union should be. Howat had just left the stand twenty minutes before, receiving the first genuine ovation given any speaker in the convention.

It is significant that Murray did not have to plead for the convention to have respect for Howat. From the time Howat stepped upon the platform until he left it, the great hall was alive, responding to every word, but giving the closest attention. There was no disorder. Howat spoke simply, in the miners' language. He told about the disputes with the operators which had originated this case, how the operators had refused to treat with the union, how Lewis had heard the pleas of the operators, and had sent two of Howat's personal enemies as a committee to investigate, how this committee had ordered Howat to order the men back to work, how Lewis now brought it to the convention to obtain the endorsement of the delegates from all over the country to his order.

"Lewis says, 'You miners are wrong; go back to work,'" said Howat. "That sounds very familiar. We have heard that song for years. The operators say it, Governor Allen says it. The Industrial Court says it. And now comes President Lewis and says it. And he wants you delegates to say it too. Maybe you will——"

"No! No!" roared back the convention.

Howat talked the miners' own tongue. He spoke in terms of struggle. Everybody understood him, and most of them loved him for what he said and the way he said it. Howat has one message: if the workers want anything, they must fight for it. After they get it, they must fight to keep it. And they must keep on fighting, so long as there is anything which should be theirs that is withheld from them. It was the first honest-to-God talk that had been heard in this convention, and the delegates flowered out like rose-buds in a warm rain. No, that figure is too peaceful. "They rose like lions after

slumber"—that is better, and is just as literary. Anyway, they roared, literally roared their appreciation of this touch of reality in an unreal convention.

"The United Mine Workers is a business concern," these words of President Lewis sounded the keynote of his speech. The United Mine Workers is a business concern, and if it would place profitable contracts it must not injure the feelings of the good capitalists. Howat injures their feelings. Therefore Howat is bad business.

"The coal operators of West Virginia base their opposition to us on the ground that we do not enforce our contracts. They cite Howat as an example. And if this convention does not rebuke Howat, and re-establish the sanctity of the contracts, and put us back upon a solid basis of business, then the West Virginia operators are right." I will not guarantee the exactness of these words, but I will swear that such was the plain and clear idea that Lewis conveyed and intended to convey to the convention.

No wonder Murray had to plead, "For God's sake, have some respect for your President!" There were few there who had after that. But Lewis and his kind have other ammunition.

The vague menace that has been hanging around the convention for three days, suddenly became sharp and definite today. Lewis was fighting with his back to the wall. The crowd of delegates, over 1,500 of them, was hostile, there were questions, boos, whistles, hisses. So he had to pull out his real guns. They were Government guns. The Government has been hanging around in the atmosphere here all the time. Lewis dissipated the vagueness. He made it clear and distinct.

"If you do not accept the policy which I have laid down for you, then will the United Mine Workers surely be destroyed."

Then, just as the convention was about to adjourn until tomorrow morning, the Great Trump Card was played. United States Marshals from the Federal Court of Indiana, appeared upon the stage and served the papers in a suit for a "perpetual injunction" against the United Mine Workers, charging it with being a criminal conspiracy.

"There, what did I tell you!" said Lewis.

About an hour before, Mr. Lewis had said, "Howat charges me with being a friend and henchman of the coal operators. Is it true?"

The great crowd of delegates were silent.

It looks that way, Mr. Lewis, it looks that way.

SAMUEL WILL PRAY FOR US

Indianapolis, Ind., Sept. 24, 1921.

"I will pray for the United Mine Workers," said Samuel Gompers to-day, addressing the Convention. He had come to the point where it seemed that he should propose something in the way of action. This was his offering.

Most of his time was taken up by sentences which began "I remember"—not one of them began "I propose." A rather absent-minded old gentleman, musing over dusty records of past trivialities! With European labor discussing

one main question, how to destroy Capitalism, with the United States facing the most serious crisis in history, a general assault on labor organization by all the forces of government, press, pulpit and employers, with unemployment bringing starvation to millions, still the keynote of his speech was "I remember." Along toward the last was incidental advice not to accept wage reductions, but this was quickly followed by the advice, "Do not over-run," "Get our goal by evolution and not by revolution!" and the last pronouncement was against the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The miners are a brave lot, and hardy. They take punishment well. The majority are still in the hall at 11.30 after more than a half hour of this. Of those that are left, a few are asleep, some read their papers, a few more stroll out every few minutes. All is peaceful. An occasional murmur, presumably applause, will undoubtedly be noted by the sharp-eared stenographers.

"Labor leaders should not leave their jobs for posts in government or business," said Mr. Gompers. "Those whom I whom I recognize are married to their jobs and cannot be divorced." Then he turned to Lewis and said, "My race has not been run yet." They both "are married to their jobs," and will only be divorced by some great spiritual revival in the labor movement.

Another forty minutes of harmless chatter, some leaky economics, reminiscences, "the great John Mitchell, now in Heaven", "give the miners an opportunity to (11:57 A. M., Will the end come soon?), "that democracy might be safe", "profiteers" (applause), "spirit of freedom", "we should voice our protests in a minor key", etc., etc. Silence! The great man is gone.

Wm. Green, the Secretary of the Miners Union, had read to the delegates the application for injunction, filed yesterday by the coal operators, which is directed at the very life of the Union. He told the convention that it contained the testimony before the Senate Committee of a former President of the United Mine Workers, now a hired agent of the mine-owners, which was made part of the evidence against the Union. This former President had stated that he knew and admitted that the U. M. W. was a conspiracy. Upon demand from the floor he named the former official who had openly turned traitor as T. L. Lewis. No, this is not the Lewis now in office, who is for the present ostensibly working in favor of the miners.

Yesterday was taken up with a discussion of Lewis's charges against Howat, and his demands that the convention instruct Howat to order certain miners back to work. This question was interrupted by the entrance of the Great Man who had made the morning session today so tranquil.

If this convention votes the way it cheers, there is only one decision possible. Howat is the big man in the convention. He stands for the whole militant spirit of the miners, which is balked at every turn by the "business man" administration. He is the incarnation of that defiance and hate of the oppressive hand of the Government, which hovers over this convention, and becomes