

Across America

walked a little apart from the others and he made no effort to hold me.

"Boy," he said softly, "I hate this job."

We walked on. "If it was some foreign enemy," he went on, "it would be different."

"Yes," I said, "you're being sent against your own people here." He nodded.

I asked him how much he was getting paid. "We don't know," he said. "All they keep telling us is we got to do our duty. I know duty is duty, but this is lousy."

"Are there many others that feel this way?" "Some."

As we came close to military headquarters I said: "You fellows are doing the dirty work

of Miniger (president of the Auto-Lite Company)."

"I know it," he said.

At headquarters I showed my press card and was released.

Later that night I was told that several guardsmen had thrown down their guns and said they were through with the dirty mess.

Pawns of the millionaire auto magnates, how long will it be before they too will understand? How long before they cross over to the other side of the street, the side of the workers, and fight shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy with something other than stones?

By the time this reaches NEW MASSES readers, the general strike will probably have been decided one way or the other. But however it turns out, the Toledo workers are writing history in bold and imperishable letters. Out of a strike at a small factory, a strike which was dying on its feet, there has come, as a result of mass picketing organized with the aid of a numerically weak Unemployed Council, such a mighty demonstration of working class courage and solidarity as should speak volumes to the Minigers, the Tafts, the slick labor misleaders—and the Roosevelts too—if only they are not too blind to read the handwriting on the wall.

II: Truckmen in Minneapolis

SENDER GARLIN

MINNEAPOLIS.

FROM THE street-car window on my way to the headquarters of the striking truckmen I suddenly see a squad of National Guardsmen marching. What's up? . . .

Out in front of the big unused garage at 1900 Chicago Avenue hundreds of strikers and their friends were gathered. A Negro truckman in overalls, a sawed-off baseball bat in his hand, is directing traffic. The garage is jammed with strikers. On an improvised wooden platform a member of the General Drivers' and Helpers' Union No. 574 is reading off the terms of settlement with the bosses. The microphone doesn't work and only those in the back of the garage can hear; they shout to the speaker, "Talk up, why don't you!" The only other equipment on the platform is a piano on which one of the workers strikes up jazz tunes when things get dull.

The strikers stand close against one another, pressing forward to hear the words of the speaker. It is hot and stuffy and no air comes through the windows because strikers, unable to get into the garage, block the windows from the outside in an effort to follow the proceedings. Everyone stands except about fifty or sixty women—wives, sisters or daughters of the strikers—who are seated on chairs on the left side of the garage.

The union representative is reading from the terms of the settlement which the men are being asked to vote upon: (1) "That the strike of said local union No. 574 be called off immediately and all employees as of May 1, 1934, be returned to their former positions without discrimination, before any new person, not on the payroll as of that date, be employed—wages to commence as of date of re-employment." The speaker reads on: (2) "Each firm affected hereby shall adhere to and be

found by all the requirements of Section 7-a of the National Industrial Recovery Act, to wit: Every code of fair competition . . ." A voice hurls from the floor: "Does that mean the bosses recognize our union?" The union speaker hastens to explain that "it amounts to about the same because it'll make the employers conform to Section 7-a of the N.R.A."

He proceeds with the reading of the agreement. "Point 6 of the agreement," he continues, "says that 'in the event that any employer affected hereby and his employees or their representatives cannot agree upon a wage scale or conditions of employment, such employer shall submit such subject or subjects to said Minneapolis-St. Paul regional labor board for arbitration'."

Another voice from the floor: "Ain't that what we've been fightin' against—these arbitrating boards?" The union speaker hastens to explain that the men will be "adequately represented" and will get "a fair and square deal." He reads on until he reaches the final point in the agreement: "the present wage scale of each employer for the various classes of employees, until and unless changed by agreement between employers and employees, or the representatives of employees, or by arbitration as provided in section 6 hereof, shall remain in force and effect for at least one year from date hereof."

"Brother chairman," comes a sharp call from the side of the hall, "I drive a cab and haul down less than ten bucks a week. Does that agreement mean that I can't get any more than that for a whole year?"

The speaker hastens to explain that "we can't get everything at once. We've got to be satisfied with what we can get at this time, and later on we can take the matter of wages and other grievances to the arbitration board."

There is a painful pause. And then someone in the front makes a motion to accept the agreement. "All those in favor will say aye," suggests the union speaker. A scattering of "ayes" follows. "All those opposed will say no." A thunder of "noes." The union spokesman looks confused until one of the strikers suggests that they had better take a secret ballot.

Everyone is ordered out of the hall, and only those with strikers' badges are permitted to return. The men line up single file and cast their ballots in two big paper cartons near the edge of the platform. It takes about a half hour for everybody to vote and during this time I look around at the women folk in the room. They look tired and worried, and many of them appear perplexed. A thin, angular faced woman of about thirty who sits next to me points out her John who is casting his ballot. "There he is over there," she tells me. John is a stocky truckman who earns \$12 a week, his wife informs me. "The companies are spending \$10,000 a day to beat the strike, why can't they use the money to give the men better wages? Most of these men are married and have families, and the only way we can get clothes is to beg for it from the Parent-Teachers' Association; and they sure make you feel it when they give you the stuff."

The ballots are all in, and the strikers prepare to hear the result, but no effort is made to count them. Suddenly another union spokesman appears and announces that "half of you men don't know what you're voting for; besides, there are some here who followed the good old Republican custom of voting three times." Roused by the insult, one of the strikers shouts: "Where the hell have you been all this time?" The boys on the plat-

form decide to spend no more time on parliamentary amenities and shove Congressman Shoemaker, the Farmer-Labor demagogue, to the microphone. A husky six-footer, coatless and arms waving, Shoemaker tells the men to "vote for the agreement because it means at least a 90 percent victory for you." He does not analyze the agreements; he is vague on details, but he launches into flowery analogies between an army and its officers. "You have to support your officers," he screams, "or your army will be destroyed." Similar speeches follow. Groups of strikers shout their objections, but Grant Dunne, a strike committeeman, joins Shoemaker in asking for harmony. "We haven't had a fist-fight so far," Dunne remarks, "and it would be a shame if we started tonight."

Two previous ballots having been ignored by the union leaders, the vote is again put and in the confusion of the ballyhoo the chairman announces that the agreement is carried. "Be here at four o'clock in the morning," he shouts, "so that you can go to work if the employers sign the agreement tonight." The bosses did—probably even before the men voted.

Thus the 11-day struggle of the 5,000 Minneapolis truck drivers which electrified the country was surrendered after victory was virtually in the hands of the strikers.

At 11:30 p.m. on May 15 all trucks rolled into their garages. The strike was on. A complete tie-up was effected of all commercial trucks, transfer and storage trucks, grocery, mill, meat and packing house trucks, lumber, hardware and other building material trucks, as well as vehicles of all manufacturing concerns. Only milk, beer and ice trucks were permitted to operate. The owners had flatly rejected the union's demand for a closed shop, and just before the strike commenced the union modified this demand to the extent of insisting only on written recognition, but the bosses rejected this also.

What helped bring the Minneapolis truckmen's strike onto the front pages of every paper in the country was what the strikers themselves describe as "The Battle of Bulls' Run." After the strike had been on for two days, more than 2,000 business men held a "Law and Order" meeting in the West Hotel

in Minneapolis and decided to recruit deputies to break the strike. The test of strength came on the following Tuesday when the trucking companies, fortified by hundreds of deputized "citizens" receiving \$5 a day for their services, attempted to run trucks. The special deputies, armed with new, unpainted clubs fresh from the lathe, were drawn in a line on North Sixth Street. The pickets began assembling in the City Market as early as 4:30 in the morning, and when the deputies attempted to roll the trucks, they met with a barrage of rocks and loose paving blocks. Cornered with the uniformed cops timidly looking on, the \$5-a-day deputies were mercilessly clubbed by the infuriated strikers. Scrambling frantically in an effort to escape, deputies discarded their badges and sought to slip through the lines. Following this crushing defeat, Chief of Police Johannes appealed to Dr. E. T. Boquist, commander of the fifth district of the American Legion posts to raise 1,500 special police from the ranks of the Legion, but this request was not granted on the ground that such an act "would be a violation of the American Legion constitution."

When the smoke of the "Battle of Bulls' Run" was over more than a score of special deputies were lying in the General Hospital and one of the leaders of the vigilantes, C. Arthur Lyman, was dead. Lyman, vice-president of the American Ball Company, who paid his men 20 cents an hour—laying off his machinists and using apprentices—was mourned by the Minneapolis Journal as "A Martyr for Law and Order," which declared that "in the welter of passion that ensued the red forces of communism and anarchy saw their chance to take control. . . . A fine, upstanding citizen, of high character, public spirited, civic minded, Arthur Lyman went to his untimely death, 'a Christian soldier marching as to war.'"

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The Journal blames the "Reds," but another "Christian soldier" writing to the same paper in the "What Other People Think" section, condemns the authorities for "sending a handful of untrained and unorganized recruits to cope with a mob of thousands of reds and sympathizers."

The next day Gov. Floyd B. Olson, Farmer-Labor arch-demagogue who recently demanded the "abolition of capitalism by law within a year" called out three companies of National Guard composed of 3,700 men to protect, presumably, the last twelve months of capitalism's existence.

An example of what Karl Liebknecht called "squaring the circle"—describing the creation of armies composed of workers to be used for the suppression of the working class—was dramatically revealed in the truckmen's strike. Pickets who were also guardsmen were ordered to report for duty. One wonders what might have happened if the troops had been called into action against the strikers with these forces in their ranks. . . .

The truckmen's strike opened with a fervor and determination that presaged victory. Picket lines were as "tight as a drum." A sympathy walkout of 35,000 building trades workers came in response to the heroic stand of the truckers. Police, scabs and special deputies were defeated at every turn. The Communist Party and Trade Union Unity League supported the strike and picketing in such an energetic fashion that Roy Weir, organizer of the Central Labor Union and Farmer-Labor representative in the Minnesota Legislature, found it necessary to tell a crowd of more than 20,000 workers: "We appreciate the help of the Unemployed Councils and the Communist Party which have sent in their best fighters in this strike." Sympathy for the strikers came from most sections of the population. Nevertheless, with victory in the hands of the strikers, the leaders agreed to a series of truces which opened the way for defeat by slowing up the tempo of the strike and providing the bosses with an opportunity for perfecting their strategy.

The triple-alliance agreement of the bosses, Farmer-Labor and strike leaders, left the workers where they were the day of the strike as far as union recognition and economic advances are concerned. Moreover, the men are sentenced to no-strike policy for one year.

But, as events have shown in Detroit, Toledo and elsewhere, the rank and file break through the barriers of N.R.A.-inspired agreements.

III: Longshoremen on the Pacific

IRIS HAMILTON

SAN FRANCISCO.

DEAR MISS PERKINS: You wanted a first-class strike: Come to the Pacific, anywhere between Vancouver to Mexico, and you will see one.

History is on the run. You can't keep up. Out of breath, you can only pause and listen for a moment, before the page turns:

"This tie-up is complete on the whole coast. Virtually no cargo ship sails the Pacific Ocean." TACOMA: General strike threatened if business men persist in demands for

troops to guard waterfront. PORTLAND: Shipping at a standstill. All lumber camps and mills in the district shut down, owing to inability to ship products. LOS ANGELES: Walter Hannefield, 42, former policeman and private dock guard, arrested on suspicion of fatally shooting Richard Parker, young striker (20), in San Pedro Dock riot. Orange shipmen rotting in the docks. SAN PEDRO: Crews of six steamers at San Pedro and Long Beach walk off the vessels after sailors', firemen's, oilers', water-tenders', wipers', cooks'

and stewards' unions vote sympathy strike. SAN FRANCISCO: Shipping executives are battling with mounting accumulations of cargo on the San Francisco waterfront. . . . Not a vessel left a port for coastal traffic today. . . .

The last stevedores' strike in San Francisco was in 1919. It was lost. The men's ranks were split up, an "alleged" company union was formed—the Blue Book Union—and all was "quiet" on the waterfront. There was an I. L. A.—International Longshoremen's Association—in some other ports, and in July,