

Steel's G.O.P. Vigilantes

MARGUERITE YOUNG

ALIQUIPPA, PA.

SITTING alone for over an hour before a vigilante leader, I heard from his own lips how he organized the secret gang, with the vice-president of Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation personally participating in the preliminaries. The terror general himself is one of those typical best-citizen viceroys—director of a bank in which steel officials own stock, public office holder in the local government, and official head of the Republican Party in this, the \$60,000,000 company's sacred and sinister borough. On Page One of the Aliquippa Gazette, published by the same gentleman vigilante, his anonymous followers are openly inciting violence, in particular against John L. Lewis and in general against all steel workers joining the union. Bloodshed is what they invite. And in case of a strike? No, not at all. *Now!* This hour of *organizing* is for them "this hour of strife."

Vigilanteism is but the latest and extreme expression of the raw absolutism of the masters in a center which, above all others I have visited thus far, Hitler ought to envy most. Traditionally, Aliquippa is tough, a spot to single out as such even in the all-round tough territory of Steel. Here in 1933 was mobilized and deputized a steel-helmet phalanx that swept across the bridge to the neighboring city of Ambridge to end a strike by a rain of lead from their Tommy-guns, killing one and wounding scores. After that Aliquippa came to be known as a place where you never saw a smile. Here you understand why the greatest obstacle to unity is something which seems to blow out of the mill stacks with the black smoke and to drift like a noxious, paralyzing vapor: fear. And yet, just here in Aliquippa, you witness simultaneously, to a degree that fills the mind with wonder at the human capacity for it, that other product of oppression: courage. Here more dramatically than elsewhere I saw the mass moving, slowly but with the inexorable certainty of an avalanche. I saw twenty-five hundred men and women meet and *laugh* at the tyrant's slanderous threats. Union leaders, with inexhaustible resource and strength, answered the vigilantes with a leaflet clarioning, "*We have nothing to fear.*" And I heard the workers affirm it collectively and individually—in the spirit of a motherly woman whose Slavic face was luminous as she said, "Boss tell husband better keep out of union. We not scared. Not scared of company, not scared of vigilante, not scared of nothing only God." When these things can happen in Aliquippa, you know the odds in the national contest must be on the side of the workers.

Steel has made an art of segregating its


workers. All through the beautiful valleys of the Monongahela, the Allegheny, and the Ohio, you see them hurled as close together as possible in shacks by the mills and their all-seeing eye. Jones & Laughlin, the colossal independent, went a step further than United States Steel, isolating groups within its own domain. In this "Plan," or section, no foreigners are allowed; in that suffocating hollow full of rotting shacks, Negroes; in another, more habitable, straw bosses and foremen.

Secluded from even the last, at 401 Highland Avenue, lives J. A. C. Ruffner, Repub-

lican borough chairman, borough and school district tax collector, director of the Woodlawn Building & Loan and of the Woodlawn Trust Company, president of the firm which publishes the Aliquippa Gazette, and director and vice-president of the First National Bank. You go up a private walk past a fountain half hidden in shrubbery, which cloaks the hill and the white house at the top from the people down below.

I FOUND Mr. Ruffner at home reading his newspaper. He unfolded out of his easy chair, a lank man with a lank, bald

INVOICE



FEDERAL LABORATORIES, INC.
PROTECTION ENGINEERING 57
GENERAL OFFICES & FACTORY 105 FORTY-FIRST ST.
PITTSBURGH, PA., U.S.A.

CABLE ADDRESS
FEDERALLAB

SOLD TO Jones and Laughlin
3rd Avenue and Ross Street
Pittsburgh, Penna.

INVOICE NO. 21075
DATE May 26th, 1934
OUR ORDER NO. 22866-263
YOUR ORDER NO. 13,038
AGENT Baum
VIA Del. by Mr. Baum

TERMS	net	SHIPPED			
6	12" Cal. Riot Gun, 201		60.00ea.	360.00	
6	12" Cal. Riot Gun Cases, 211		7.50ea.	45.00	
48	12" Cal. Short Range Cartridges		4.50ea.	216.00	
24	12" Cal. Long Range Projectiles		7.50ea.	180.00	
100	Grenades, 105M		10.00ea.	1000.00	
100	M-20 Billy Cartridges		1.50ea.	150.00	
				<u>1951.00</u>	
				100.00	
				<u>1951.00</u>	
				75.60	
				<u>1,926.60</u>	

Loss 10% on 5th item

10% Excise Tax on items 1-5 and 4

PAYMENTS TO BE MADE ONLY TO
FEDERAL LABORATORIES INC. PITTSBURGH, PA.

ALL CLAIMS FOR SHORTAGE OR DAMAGE MUST BE MADE WITHIN FIVE DAYS OF RECEIPT OF GOODS
GOODS RETURNED WITHOUT OUR PERMISSION WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

The Jones & Laughlin Steel Corp. prepares: Invoice for arms purchase

head and a smile that seemed to crack the taut thin skin of his cheeks. I asked him at once whether he was a member of the executive committee of the Committee of Five Hundred, as the vigilantes called themselves. He replied unhesitatingly, "Yes."

IT required no special technique to set him talking. Exemplifying the theory that ruling by sheer might tends to atrophy the intelligence, Ruffner simply assumed that we were on the same side. Moreover, he was quite proud of his little organization. Presently I asked whether the Committee of Five Hundred hadn't evolved from a meeting of business men in the Aliquippa Golf Club, invitations for which were issued by his associate, P. M. Moore. This man, Moore, is a co-director with Ruffner of the Woodlawn Trust.

"Well, not directly," Ruffner emphasized in reply, "although you never can tell, afterwards, what leads up to things, can you?"

"At any rate, it's true that you and other business men discussed the question of the steel workers' organizing at the golf club meeting shortly before you formed the committee?" I repeated. He answered, "Yes. We had a most delightful get-together in the golf club as the guests of Mr. Moore. One of the friendliest get-togethers I ever attended."

"When was that?"

"Oh, about a week ago," he said.

Since this was July 18, the get-together occurred about July 11. On July 14, the Committee of Five Hundred announced itself. On that day the *Gazette* blazoned a reproduction of a leaflet which was distributed at the mill-gates. Attacking the union's program, the leaflet imputed violent intent and invited retaliation. It italicized: "My name is John L. Lewis . . . I am a blood sucker . . . I must stir up hatred and violence . . . I will have in my employ many Communists. They are good at violence and bloodshed." Then it admonished everyone: "You can not be neutral in this hour of strife. . . . The fight is yours, you cannot evade it . . . take your place in the ranks with us, in the movement to show Racketeer Lewis that we have only one answer for him. Mr. John L. Lewis, we do not need you. 'You are dirty and the town and citizens of Aliquippa are clean.'" The signature was not that of Ruffner or Moore or any known mill official or flunkie, but that of Dr. H. S. Gilliland, Chairman. Gilliland is a Republican dentist, former squire and school principal, now borough councilman in Aliquippa.

I inquired how many were present in the golf club soirée. Ruffner answered, "About 400 or 500. Now, I want to be entirely sincere—there were exactly 298 autos parked at the club. That's why I estimate we must have been about 400 or 500." Such a number would indicate many mill foremen and bosses were present, for surely there weren't 400 business men in Aliquippa, with its 20,

000 or so population. But no, Ruffner assured me, there were only eight or ten of those present. Some business men brought people from their staffs.

"Was the general superintendent of the mill present? Mr. Harry Saxon, or some such name?"

"Yes," Ruffner replied amiably, "Harry Saxon — S-a-x-o-n, general superintendent here."

"And the chief speaker was a Mr. Fieger, or Fleiger, vice-president of Jones & Laughlin?"

"Yes," Ruffner said, pausing so I could write it down, "F. E. Fieger—F-i-e-g-e-r, vice-president and general manager of Jones & Laughlin, such a delightful man, one of the most delightful I ever met. He gave us a wonderful talk. You know we greet him

warmly because he came to Aliquippa many years ago and rose from position to position until his duties finally took him to Pittsburgh. We still consider him a resident of Aliquippa. Yes, he gave a wonderful talk—not heated, you know, just a plain statement of facts."

"And many of those who heard him are in your Committee of Five Hundred?"

"Yes."

[Upon the receipt of Miss Young's dispatch, the NEW MASSES wired Mr. Fieger asking him to confirm, deny, or clarify, by collect telegram, the statements made about his participation in the formation of the vigilante Committee of Five Hundred in Aliquippa. After three days Mr. Fieger has not replied.—THE EDITORS.]

Vote Board in the (Continued on Page Two)

JOHN L. LEWIS VS. STEEL INDUSTRY

My name is John L. Lewis.
I do not work in a steel mill—I am a blood sucker. I demand that you work for me. You will pay me tribute or you will not work.
I am determined to be the chief Racketeer of the United States.
I demand tribute from every man, woman and child in the Steel Industry. I choose the Steel Industry first. Their employees are ignorant.
I demand that you make me a National Political Leader.
I demand that your employer deduct from your pay any amount of money that I may need.
I demand that you strike and that you and your family go hungry when I issue the order—I must call strikes to show that I am great. I must stir up hatred and violence so that I may use them as my tools. If I do not do so others may try to chisel in on my racket and take from me my monthly flow of a million dollars.
I have ruined the miners, but I promise not to ruin you until I have you in my power.
I will send into your town as organizers of a closed shop, men of my type. They will make a second Portsmouth. I will have in my employ many Communists. They are good at violence and bloodshed.
I, John L. Lewis demand tribute from you and you will pay me.

★ ★ ★

To every man and woman in Aliquippa, a challenge has been thrown and you will meet it as you have met every issue in the past. You can not be neutral in this hour of strife. You must either take a stand for the best interests of our town or be a tool for Racketeer Lewis. He will close the plant of the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation if he and his grafters, racketeers, trouble makers, agitators and Communists are permitted to gain foothold. The fight is yours, you cannot evade it. THE CITIZENS COMMITTEE OF FIVE HUNDRED of Aliquippa asks you to take your place in the ranks with us, in the movement to show Racketeer Lewis that we have only one answer for him.

Mr. John L. Lewis, we do not need you.
"You are dirty and the town and citizens of Aliquippa are clean."

CITIZENS COMMITTEE OF FIVE HUNDRED
DR. H. S. GILLILAND,
Chairman.

BA
SSES
BERTH

of Aliquippa, remaining town American Olympic was eliminated New York, last Aliquippa high in the hands of the colors of the club. legitimate champion of the best ham world, the ex- fully gradder has competition this ough to qualify for dall Island last week at shipped the head- that various observ- on Page Seven)

are Climbs;
Relief In Sight

On July 14, act for relief from the stage were slight to- creatures began climbing a breaking heights. only slight indications An early forecast indi- and continued warm we- death was directly con- heat, when Frank Krener and died in his home Rector.

collects
As A Hobby

of the employees of the Ali- Works, eleventh issue on July 9, on Journal published a

Washington, D. C. (UP)—The American Fed- Labor executive council, tal" of the 13 insurgen- leads into its final stages: sioners still wavering, suspend the rebels or ne- verdict.

Having turned a chilly the only compromise aug- relief leader John D. Le- teen members of the council prepared to com- ternous a series of hear- the insurgent leaders we- refused to appear, and- ably tomorrow on whe- Delay a decision on Pe- (Continued on Pa-

MINOR BLA REPORT PAST W

Five minor cal- and answered at week end by me- quippa Fire depa- resulted except- listed on one of phone call at 1- urday morning- avenue was a 1- At 2:23 a- morning fire- distinguish a fire- nue, recalling the old, Ohio while making The mattress- No damage- burster five automobile- avenue about evening, no- (Conti-

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The vigilantes open fire: The manifesto of the Citizens Committee of Five Hundred

He went on to explain why he and his fellow vigilantes are dead set against the union. They are afraid of another Portsmouth. And at the thought of the Wheeling Steel strikers' victory, so vigorously denied to be a victory by the owners, Ruffner's lids contracted in terror around his watery eyes. The expression changed to one as cold and hard as crystal, however, as he declared the steel companies cannot and will not do any more than they are doing now for the employees. And the employees are happy. They have been wonderfully, wonderfully well treated during the depression. Therefore he would do everything possible to maintain the present prosperity of Aliquippa. Of course Aliquippa was prosperous! Wages? He could not say. The Department of Labor found the average for skilled workers in the Pitts-

burgh district is \$19 and for unskilled in the blooming mills, \$14.73? Well, possibly so. You saw workers' homes that looked shabby? Ah, those must have been the foreigners'; the majority of business people think they cannot be improved. They manage pretty fat salaries to the officers, a total of \$585,575 one year? Now that hardly seemed a fair remark. "You have to pay in proportion to skill, you know."

Yes, the company had its own railroad, street cars, buses, iron and coal supplies; and its Woodlawn Land Company was renting or had sold under still-standing mortgages many workers' houses.

"And many company officials own most of the stock in the banks?" I asked him. He replied, "Not many."

I had noticed that the Pittsburgh Mercan-

tile Company, the general store and the only one where half-decent stuff was available, had a sort of checkoff in the mills—the pay envelope bore a place where what was owed it was put down as deducted.

"Yes," said Ruffner. "It was a wonderful thing during the last five years, a wonderful thing." His smile was the smile of Scrooge. Indeed it was a wonderful system. They have a machine in the store's office, and when the worker goes to ask for credit, his name is written on a machine which is connected with the mill's office, and soon automatically the machine registers the worker's check number, time, and wages due. No loss, only hunger, in this credit system.

Why did Ruffner call John L. Lewis "dirty" in the leaflet?

"Well," he said, "you can change that word to sort of yellow if you want to."

Helping steel workers to organize made him yellow? "Well," Ruffner revised, "I think Lewis's associations are largely communistic."

"What do you do with Communists in Aliquippa?" I asked, thinking of the comrades who had found ways to make themselves known, the comrades in the mill, and of the NEW MASSES and *Daily Worker* down the hill in the car. Ruffner was saying, "You know, I hate Communists like I hate a snake, and you would too, unless you want a taste of Russia, where your husband can divorce you for fifty cents in ten minutes." Of course they were "illegal" here—four years ago four workers were sent to prison for five years for having Red literature in their homes.

"Getting back to the union," I reminded Ruffner, "the workers must believe they can change their conditions, and through the union—else why do you need the Committee of Five Hundred to try to stop it?"

"Why, what's the necessity for schools?" he responded. "A large percentage of the people are not fully informed. Through the Committee we will educate them."

The way he pronounced that "educate" made the blood run cold. Did he mean the kind of education afforded by his newspaper, which scareheaded the Portsmouth strike when it broke but, when it was settled by the victory that panicked him, carried not one word? Or the kind of education that resides in nightsticks and firearms wielded by a half-dozen thugs and stool-pigeons in the night under cover of a Citizens' Committee set up by the mills, its actual numbers and its names unknown? Or perhaps both? So I asked just how the Committee would carry out the education, how would it function? And he replied with the general rather than the specific: "We will function legally and constitutionally."

"Tell me," I asked him then, "do you consider that the deputies sent against the Ambridge strike were functioning legally and constitutionally?"

"Absolutely," he let go. "That was one of the most wonderful things that ever hap-

AN OPEN CHALLENGE!

A statement supposed to have come from a Citizens Committee of Five Hundred, and signed by one Dr. H. S. Gilliland, has been brought to my attention.

From the evidence I have at my command it is obvious that the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation is responsible for issuing this statement. I believe that the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation is using Dr. H. S. Gilliland as an instrument to disseminate its false statement.

The statement is so brazenly untrue that it is unnecessary to answer it as such.

I want to thank the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation for aiding our campaign by using such tactics. We do not resort to such tactics. We have nothing to hide. We have nothing to fear. We conduct our activities openly and above board. We are pursuing this campaign along peaceful and legal lines. We deplore the fact that others do not do likewise.

No right thinking citizen can have any respect for an employer who uses such underhanded tactics, or for any individual who lets himself be used in such a manner.

The Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation admits the statement is untrue, false, and vicious by refusing to make it under its own signature.

I HEREBY OPENLY CHALLENGE THE JONES & LAUGHLIN STEEL CORPORATION TO COME OUT IN THE OPEN AND MAKE THIS STATEMENT, WHICH IT HAS UNSCRUPULOUSLY PUT IN SOMEBODY ELSE'S MOUTH.

If the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation refuses to openly make the statement it has made through a committee which does not exist, the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation thereby proves to the people of Aliquippa that the statement is false.

AT AN OUTDOOR OPEN MASS MEETING
To Be Held Sunday, July 19, 1936, at 7:00 P. M.,
in WEST ALIQUIPPA, on vacant lot next to Sons of Italy Hall,

I shall openly and publicly challenge the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation to support or deny the statement it has made through this underhanded method.

Everybody is cordially invited to attend this important meeting. I extend a special personal invitation to the steel workers of Aliquippa, and their wives, sons and daughters.

Police protection will be available for the meeting.

THE MEETING WILL BE:
DATE—Sunday, July 19, 1936.
PLACE—Vacant Lot next to Sons of Italy Hall, West Aliquippa.
TIME—7:00 O'Clock in the Evening.

(Signed) JOSEPH J. TIMKO,
 International Representative of the United Mine Workers of America,
 and in charge for the Steel Workers Organizing Committee of
 the campaign in Beaver County.

The workers counter-attack: The reply of the union organizers

pened in this valley. There was none killed—except one man, and he was a bystander. We won't see the law thrown aside because certain authorities fear the mob."

Where was the mob, the throwing aside of law?

"Why, they were picketing!" Ruffner exclaimed. "Men who wouldn't work! Whenever three or four people gather together and make remarks that could be resented by another person, they are inciting to riot."

I asked him whether he expected that concept to be enforced by Governor Earle and Lieutenant-Governor Kennedy, who promised public strike relief and the protection of civil rights. He replied, "That seems to me the breakdown of law enforcement." And that's where his Committee of Five Hundred comes in. I had heard that the whole union question was discussed at the Republican Slovak club of Aliquippa, cooperation with the vigilantes being demanded. He confirmed this. He said that he, who happens to be local head of the Republican Party, will, as a citizen, do everything possible to stop the union.

"And you expect help from the whole membership of the Republican Party?"

"I hope so," he said. "As citizens of Aliquippa I expect every one of them to help."

ALQUIPPA exhibits the characteristic triple dominance of the trusts: the economic, political, and social bullying which has a stunning impact even upon the stranger. Everything is designed to hurl the individual upon himself alone. Com-

munication is meager and expensive. There is nothing in the local paper, just nothing except anti-union shrieking; no news, above all, of labor, of the advances elsewhere of united workers. Telephones are rare as diamonds. Every cultural medium that might carry the forbidden idea of collective action is safely under control or non-existent. There is only Father Coughlin on the radio and Jean Harlow at the movies.

Yet intuitively the workers turn to union and the vanguard stand by it heroically. I saw some of the fourteen active unionists who were fired at the opening of the present drive. Most of them are just spending so much more time organizing. Mike Musulin, who gave the company one of his eyes, was getting \$4.90 a day as a furnace charger. Pete Cekoric, electrical millwright, has been twenty-six years in the mills; they were going to operate on him for an injury that resulted from his work, but instead they sent him back to work sixteen and sometimes twenty-four hours a day after the flood, then fired him. Nick Krejecic, eleven years in the mills, was earning \$3.76 a day. He put out a hand without fingers: \$15 a week for one hundred weeks, and they were just about up when he got fired. One of them told how the company-union representative came and told him he could come back to work if he quit that union stuff. "I feel like spitting in his face," said the dismissed worker. "I pick up a handful of dirt and tell him I'll eat that first."

Some went out to distribute leaflets and chanced in at a straw boss's house. He yelled

them away, "You come back here with that stuff and I'll get a shotgun and shoot you!"

A mill policeman told an organizer the mill is buying and secreting *horses*, now. Probably it is well stocked with ammunition—it laid in a supply when strike was brewing in 1934. It put undercover men on the trail of the organizers. They dogged the steps of George Isasky—a rank-and-file leader who in 1934 was railroaded to an insane asylum and held there thirty-five days until the union induced a gubernatorial investigation which proved him mentally sound and released him—so that finally George turned upon his shadows and cursed them out. Soon police arrested him and took him to a courtroom graced by the mill superintendent, in charge of witnesses who accused George of—assault and battery! He was fined \$18, just \$2 too little to appeal.

The Steel Workers' Organizing Committee picked its full-time organizers for Aliquippa carefully. With Albert Atallah, a lion-hearted Syrian with a long straight union record right here in these mills before he, too, was fired, they teamed Joseph Timko of the United Mine Workers, fresh from eleven months in terror-ridden, wits-sharpening Harlan County, Kentucky.

And since the fourteen were fired, five hundred more have signed up, and are safe in their jobs! State police patrol the streets, increasing confidence. This time you're told and have reason to believe that the union, which managed to hold together even without the Committee for Industrial Organization, will organize solidly.

Gorky the Artisan

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

THERE are men whose achievements must be remembered for their own sakes. No other or greater tribute can be paid them. There are also men whose achievements must be remembered in terms of that which comes after them. With these last it is not enough to return to the man's life as one would go back to the garden and birth house of a poet in some distant country. It is necessary to bring the life of the man forward into one's own time. Gorky is such a man. His fame stands there but it is not the fame that most concerns us. It is not even the work beneath the fame. It is the explanation of the effectiveness of that work and the possibility of producing work of equal effectiveness elsewhere than in Russia and at another time than the turn of the century. In other periods there was leisure for writers to practice at least in public the becoming virtues of modesty. Now there is no time for these virtues. Now it is necessary to learn as quickly and as eagerly as possible. Gorky is one of those from whom

it is possible to learn.

It is easy to see why this should be so. It is so because Gorky is the first to have done what many must do again. What is it then that Gorky did? Many books will answer you. They will tell you that he fought for the revolution, that he fought against the old corruption, that he created a proletarian literature, that he was perhaps the first creator of a pure proletarian literature. All these things are true and all these things are important. But these are all critics' judgments after the event. They are round and complete and final and untelling like an obituary. They describe the house perfectly after it is built but they are very little help to those who desire to labor at its building again and here. Such people have a right to a less general statement, a more accurate if a less stirring account. What is it primarily that Gorky did to make this work of his effective? What act of creation of his was the act that created what is now admired?

It would be an overbold man who would

attempt to say and yet I think something can be said. I think what can be said is this: that Gorky was at all times a cutter and shaper of the materials of construction and not himself an architect. Which is another way of saying that Gorky was at all times an artist. There are many definitions of the word artist, each more confused than the last. But one thing about the artist I believe to be self-evident—that he is concerned with freeing from the undifferentiated, uncut rock of common life the useful shapes of experience. It is his labor to make available the stone: not to calculate the blueprints. To which the corollary is that if the artist spends his time upon the blueprints there will be no stone with which to build.

Gorky was an artist from the beginning of his writing to the end. The blueprints—even the greatest blueprints—did not concern him. His biographers sometimes attempt to excuse his differences with Lenin, his period of opposition to the Revolution, his long