

The Guild Scores Again

By J. P. Dallas and Ellen McGrath

“YOU boys will have to tear up your cards in the Newspaper Guild and join the teamsters' union,” said the boss teamster.

“But we're already members of organized labor. Our department is 100-percent organized. We belong to the American Newspaper Guild,” protested employees of the Seattle *Star* circulation department.

“That don't make no difference. Ya got to join the teamsters' union or get off the job.”

Back of the boss teamster stood the company boss, Mr. Anderson, circulation manager of the paper. And backing him up he knew was the power and might of a nationally organized employer. The Seattle *Star* is a Scripps league paper. Mr. Anderson had called us together at 9 o'clock on July 2. With a self-conscious grin he had introduced Lew Shaw as a representative of the teamsters' union. Shaw was known to some of us as a “boss teamster” from the office of Dave Beck, international vice-president of the teamsters' union; as a leader of the infamous Beck “goon” squads; and as a principal in the scandalous beatings of the rank and file of the newsboys' union a few weeks before.

DAVE BECK was known to all of us. He was a \$12,000-a-year official of the teamsters' union. He had risen to power through price-fixing employer alliances and jurisdictional war on his brother A. F. of L. unionists. The chaotic laws of the Federation, its past record of fratricidal warfare, and the rule by edict of Green and the executive council furnished Beck with pretext, precedent, and authority for such action. “Everything on wheels belongs to the teamsters,” says Beck. But Seattle union men pointed out that Beck has already claimed white-collar newspaper workers, brewery workers, and longshoremen. In Seattle they say, “If you drive a car to work or there's casters on the bed you sleep in, you're on wheels and Beck will claim jurisdiction over your union.”

In a word, Beck and his man Shaw represented the worst in the American labor movement. They were in open league with our employer, the Seattle *Star* management, to break the Guild. They were “bad customers” and we were now face to face with them.

“Why should we join your union? We're satisfied with the Guild. It got us vacations with pay and a 100-percent pay raise when we joined. What more can the teamsters do for us?” said a Guildsman, replying to the boss teamster.

“You've been notified twice that we'd got a charter for you. You were told to come down to the teamsters' hall and sign up. You've

ignored these warnings. Now I'll give you fifteen minutes to make up your mind,” said the boss teamster, evading the question.

“But we're not teamsters. We don't haul or handle a single paper. We're circulation-department employees. Our work is clerical. We take care of the office details of the paper's circulation department. We belong with the Guild. Every paper is hauled by union teamsters. The teamsters' union should have no quarrel with us.”

“We don't care nothin' about all that.”

“If we join the teamsters' union, how about agreements? Do we have any part in negotiating?”

“No, we take care of that.”

“You mean we would have nothing to say about our own working conditions, hours, or wages?”

“We take care of that I said.”

“Could we sit in?”

“No.”

“What right have you got to force us into the teamsters' union? We'd like to know by what authority you're acting?”

“I'm under orders to sign you up. You've belonged to the teamsters since 1911 when the executive council of the A. F. of L. granted the teamsters jurisdiction of circulation employees.”

“Where were the teamster organizers all these years?” one circulation man wanted to know. “We've been working twelve to fourteen hours a day for fifteen dollars per week until a couple of months ago when the Guild came along.”

“Shut up!” explained Mr. Shaw.

“Mr. Anderson, this man is trying to force us out of our own union. The Wagner Act says we have a right to belong to a union of our own choosing. We have chosen the American Newspaper Guild and neither you nor the teamsters can legally interfere,” said a guildsman, appealing to the circulation manager.

Mr. Anderson didn't say anything. He only grinned.

Mr. Shaw answered. “We don't recognize no law! I said I'd give you fifteen minutes. Well, it begins right now.”

The boss teamster walked out of the room. The circulation manager followed him out.

The Seattle *Star* circulation employees were forced to choose. On their side was progressive unionism and the Wagner law. Opposing them was their employer, Dave Beck, and the A. F. of L. tories. A secret ballot was taken. Every vote was for the Guild. Two hours later the management removed these men from their jobs and teamsters were hired in their place.

Eighty-one percent of the Seattle *Star*'s

white-collar employees belonged to the Guild. The *Star* had fired all nineteen guildsmen in a department 100-percent organized. If the Guild was to exist as a union it had no alternative but to take a strike vote. When the *Star* refused to reinstate the men removed from their jobs or even retain them pending a labor board decision and would not agree to protect other departments from a similar raid, a strike was unanimously voted.

The Seattle *Star* strike was effective at the start. Picket lines closed the paper for four days. It reopened only after the Beck-controlled Seattle Central Labor Council sponsored a strike-breaking campaign. Charles Doyle, secretary of the Council, called the strike illegal, and the Guild—representing 81 percent of the employees and asking only for the rights guaranteed to them by the Wagner Labor Act—a “subversive minority.” Officers of the Council joined with the employer in exerting pressure on city officials for police “protection” to reopen the *Star*. Guild picket lines were broken when not only the police but teamster “goon” squads “protected the property of the Seattle *Star*.”

When the labor board hearing opened, an American Federation of Labor attorney acting for the teamsters' local sought to intervene. “The labor board has no jurisdiction,” he argued. “The A. F. of L. will settle this matter in its own way.”

“Al Capone hid under a union name to carry on a racket,” said Harry Gross, the Guild's attorney. “This man represents interlopers who are here to run interference for the *Star*.” The labor board denied the teamsters' petition for intervention.

THE most significant feature of the *Star* strike was this consistent A. F. of L. opposition to the Wagner Act. “Under no circumstances,” said Dave Beck, “will I permit these men to choose their union through a labor board election.”

Liberals and progressives who were shocked at this statement had only to look at the national scene to see that it was not the lone voice of a local labor chief speaking. Opposition to the Wagner Act may become a major national policy of the American Federation of Labor. But the success of their Seattle *Star* venture along this line will undoubtedly be reflected on the national scene.

The Seattle Newspaper Guild not only brought charges of an unfair labor practice against the Seattle *Star*, but appealed to the labor board for an election to determine collective bargaining representation on the Seattle *Star*. Tremendous political pressure was brought by the A. F. of L. to bear both on the

labor board and the national administration to prevent such an election.

The A. F. of L. sought modification of the Wagner Act to exempt itself and its Dave Becks from operation of the law. It adopted a rule-or-ruin policy to achieve that end. Labor chiefs who did not blush at aiding the publishers to break up the Newspaper Guild of course did not hesitate to support the Liberty Leaguers in their current attack on the Wagner Act.

AFTER a seven months' battle, the *Star* strike ended on February 2 in a complete victory—a victory for the Guild, the C.I.O., and all progressive unionists. The *Star* paid \$29,497 to the strikers in back wages, fired the scabs, and signed one of the best Guild contracts in the United States. The agreement is in-

dustrial union in principle, recognizing the Guild as the sole collective bargaining agency for the editorial, advertising, and business office divisions.

Jurisdiction in the circulation department, awarded to the Guild by the National Labor Relations Board, will be decided by the case now pending in the United States Circuit Court of Appeals. The nineteen circulation men, whose discharge precipitated the strike, were given full back pay and reemployed at other work on the *Star*, pending the court decision.

The *Star* agreed to no "economy" reductions in the staff for six months, to severance pay up to fifteen weeks' wages, the five-day, forty-hour week in all departments, two weeks' vacation with pay, and preferential re-hiring, which provides virtually a closed shop.

This victory is a splendid example of real working-class unity—trade unionists in the American Federation of Labor cooperating with their brothers on the C.I.O. picket line. It is a victory of trade-union unity over all the combined forces of reaction in the Northwest: Dave Beck and the teamster bosses; Mayor Dore and the reactionary city administration; and the newspaper publishers. The newspaper publishers and reactionary employers in the Northwest learned that the American Federation of Labor bosses couldn't sit behind closed doors and sell the labor movement. The people of Seattle learned that the C.I.O. unions were fighting for democracy in the labor movement, for the principle of the Wagner Act and the right of Americans to join a union of their own choosing, and supported them to victory.



Roar China!

Roar, China!
 Roar, old lion of the East!
 Snort fire, yellow dragon of the Orient,
 Tired at last of being bothered.
 Since when did you ever steal anything
 From anybody,
 Sleepy wise old beast
 Known as the porcelain-maker,
 Known as the poem-maker,
 Known as maker of firecrackers?
 A long time since you cared
 About taking other people's lands
 Away from them.
 THEY must've thought you didn't care
 About your own land either—
 So THEY came with gunboats,
 Set up Concessions,
 Zones of influence,
 International Settlements,
 Missionary houses,
 Banks,
 And Jim Crow Y.M.C.A.'s.
 THEY beat you with malacca canes
 And dared you to raise your head—
 Except to cut it off.
 Even the yellow men came
 To take what the white men
 Hadn't already taken.
 The yellow men dropped bombs on Chapei.
 The yellow men called you the same names
 The white men did:

Dog! Dog! Dog!
Coolie dog!
Red! . . . Lousy red!
Red coolie dog!

And in the end you had no place
 To make your porcelain,
 Write your poems,
 Or shoot your firecrackers on holidays.

In the end you had no peace
 Or calm left at all.
 PRESIDENT, KING, MIKADO
 Thought you really were a dog.
 THEY kicked you daily
 Via radiophone, via cablegram,
 Via gunboats in the harbor,
 Via malacca canes.
 THEY thought you were a tame lion,
 A sleepy, easy, tame old lion!
 Ha! Ha!
 Haaa-aa-a! . . . Ha!
 Laugh, little coolie boy on the docks of Shanghai, laugh!
 You're no tame lion.
 Laugh, red generals in the hills of Siang-kiang, laugh!
 You're no tame lion.
 Laugh, child slaves in the factories of the foreigners!
 You're no tame lion.
 Laugh—and roar, China! Time to spit fire!
 Open your mouth, old dragon of the East,
 To swallow up the gunboats in the Yangtse!
 Swallow up the foreign planes in your sky!
 Eat bullets, old maker of firecrackers—
 And spit out freedom in the face of your enemies!
 Break the chains of the East,
 Little coolie boy!
 Break the chains of the East,
 Red generals!
 Break the chains of the East,
 Child slaves in the factories!
 Smash the iron gates of the Concessions!
 Smash the pious doors of the missionary houses!
 Smash the revolving doors of the Jim Crow Y.M.C.A.'s.
 Crush the enemies of land and bread and freedom!
 Stand up and roar, China!
 You know what you want!
 The only way to get it is
 To take it!
 Roar, China!

LANGSTON HUGHES.