

FOR A RISING SCALE  
OF WAGES TO MEET  
INCREASED LIVING COSTS!

# THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. VI—No. 22

NEW YORK, N. Y., SATURDAY, MAY 30, 1942



FIVE (5) CENTS

## GOVERNMENT ACTS TO CHECK PAY RISES

### Steel Union Convention Shows Rising Discontent

Rank and File Delegates Voice Growing Dissatisfaction With Leaders' Policies

By ART PREIS

CLEVELAND, May 23. — The four-day constitutional convention of the CIO United Steelworkers of America, which raced through its final session last night in the Public Auditorium here, revealed the rank and file steel workers' deep-seated dissatisfaction with the bureaucratic administration of their union and with the do-nothing policies of the leadership in the settlement of their mounting grievances.

Behind this dissatisfaction, which expressed itself during the convention primarily on organizational issues, is a growing unrest among the steel workers because of their rapidly worsening conditions: extensive part-time unemployment despite increasing war production; the refusal of the bosses, taking advantage of the no-strike agreement of the union leaders, to settle grievances; and the sharp decline in living standards due to price rises.

This underlying unrest revealed itself at the convention in the form of rank and file resistance to a number of proposals put forth by Philip Murray, chairman of the former Steel Workers Organizing Committee and president of the newly constituted international.

#### MURRAY DOMINATED

From the very outset of the convention, Murray personally assumed the job of beating down this rank and file opposition. He disclosed his main aim to be the centralizing of all power in his own hands, lining up of the union for unconditional support of the Roosevelt administration, and curbing of any attempts to initiate a fighting program in defense of the steel workers' interests.

From first to last, this was Murray's convention. He dominated it at every moment, speaking lengthily on all issues, great or small. In addition to his own personal prestige, carefully built up and hallowed, Murray relied principally on the authority of President Roosevelt, in whose name he continually spoke, to whip the delegates into line and shove over his program.

In this way, and with the aid of a powerful machine of paid organizers and functionaries who honeycombed the convention and whooped it up for Murray at every crucial point, Murray secured the constitution and powers he sought. But this was achieved at the expense of his prestige among a large number of delegates. Murray himself openly bears the responsibility for the unpopular measures which he thrust down the throats of the delegates.

#### A CHANGED ATTITUDE

Today hundreds of the rank and file delegates homeward bound to the mill towns and steel centers are angry as hornets. They feel compromised before their local members, who in many instances mandated them to fight for issues which Murray opposed. Most of them had entered the convention staunch Murray supporters, firmly believing that Murray himself bore no responsibility for the bureaucratic, do-nothing methods of his lieutenants and organizers. Every conscious delegate now knows differently.

The genuinely representative delegates had come to the convention with the hope of drafting a truly democratic constitution, which would safeguard the rights of the members and provide them with local autonomy and the means for building their local unions. They had come in the belief that they would be permitted to establish a militant leadership directly elected from their own ranks, including their local organizers. They had come expecting to initiate a program of action which would enable them to settle their grievances in the plants and win their demands for a dollar-a-day general wage raise and the union shop.

But they left the convention with a constitution formally consolidating all power in Murray's hands alone and depriving the local unions of any vestige of autonomy. They left with a program which pays mere lip service

intervened, as he was to do on all subsequent issues.

While the delegates were permitted a scant five minutes to speak their minds, Murray and the other officers were permitted to speak as long as they desired. The main point of Murray's first statement on the overtime issue was to the effect that it was really no sacrifice, that present practices in the steel industry were such that few workers would be affected by such a surrender.

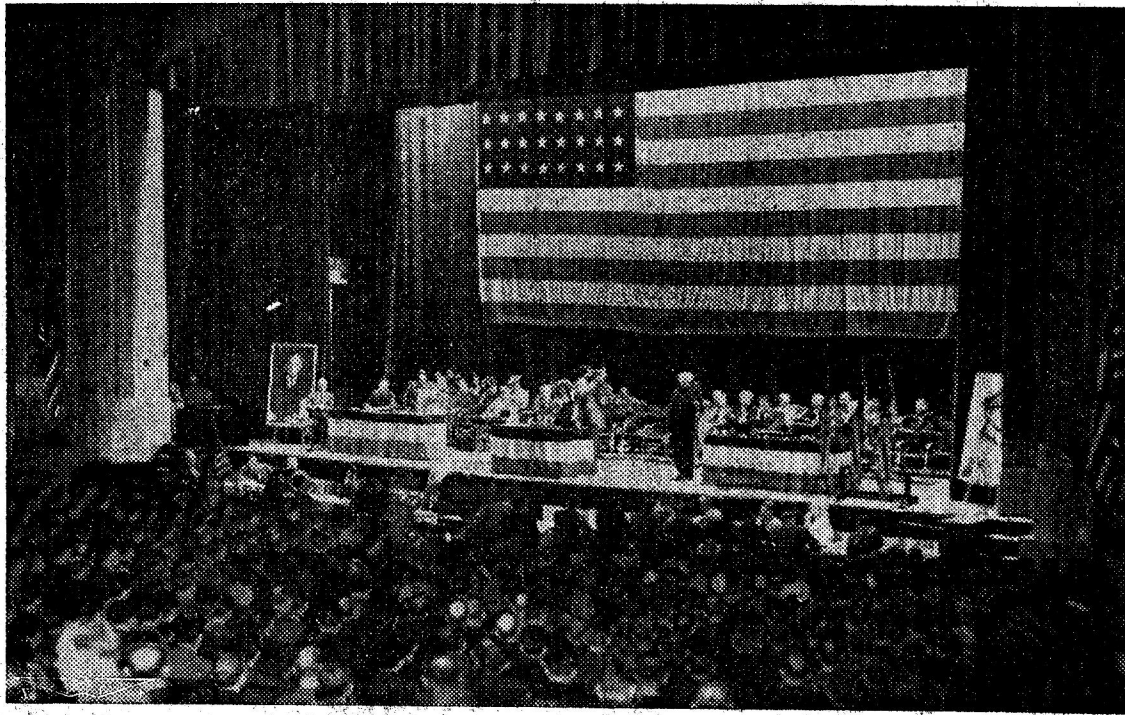
#### MURRAY CRACKS WHIP

After this, ten more delegates took the floor in opposition. The response to their views grew warmer and warmer. Then Murray spoke again, this time cracking the whip hard.

He poured it on about every union in the country supporting the proposal. He declared that if the steel workers did not accept

(Continued on page 2)

### AT THE STEEL CONVENTION



Above is a scene at the first constitutional convention of the United Steelworkers of America, CIO, representing 600,000 organized workers. Probably the largest trade union convention ever held in this country, it was attended by about 1700 delegates. A report on the convention written by THE MILITANT's special correspondent will be found on the left side of this page.

## ACT NOW TO SAVE WALLER'S LIFE!

An Editorial

The fight to save the life of Odell Waller, Negro sharecropper condemned to be executed in Virginia on June 19, was taken to the United States Supreme Court for the second time this week.

The first time, on May 4, the Court refused to review the case, and failed to even state the reason for its refusal.

This time the Waller case goes to the Court with more public support than ever before. This time a brief to the Court on behalf of Waller was signed among others by Lee Pressman, general counsel for the CIO, and Joseph A. Padway, general counsel for the AFL.

Other organizations which signed the brief are the American Civil Liberties Union; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; National Urban League; United Transport Service Workers of America; Southern Tenant Farmers Union; Union for Democratic Action; Negro Labor Committee. The defense movement is also supported by numerous central labor bodies and trade union locals, and liberal groups.

All this is evidence of the growing realization by the masses that their own rights as well as Waller's are under attack in this case.

Waller killed his white landlord in self-defense during a dispute over the crop shares belonging to the Waller family. He was entitled to trial by a jury of his peers — but he was denied the right to such a trial. In Virginia only payers of the poll tax can be placed on the jury lists. The poverty-stricken sharecroppers like Waller who barely earn enough to feed them-

selves are unable to pay the poll tax. More than 80 per cent of the population in Waller's county are barred therefore both from voting and serving on juries.

The masses of people do not know what legal pretext the Court had in mind when it refused to consider the Waller case. But they do know that if one man can be denied the right of trial by a jury of his peers, so can others. And they know that the best time to stop it from going any further is now. That is why they are rallying to the defense of this victim of the brutal sharecropper system.

The masses do not know what the Court's attitude is toward the poll tax, because the Court expressed no opinion in refusing to review this case. But they do know that the disfranchisement of the southern workers and sharecroppers results in the systematic election of legislators who control the most important congressional committees, sponsor the most reactionary anti-labor legislation, spike such measures as anti-lynch bills and relief appropriations and thus affect the conditions of workers in all parts of the country. That is why the masses want the Supreme Court to act on the Waller case, and using it as a basis, to declare the poll tax unconstitutional.

The movement defending Waller is growing every day, its voice of protest is becoming loud and unmistakable. But it must grow more and it must protest louder — until even the Supreme Court, which "follows the elections," does not feel it wise to ignore the case. In this fight every workers' organization in the country has an interest and a part to play, and should be called upon to take action before it is too late.

### THOUSANDS STRIKE AT BUDD PLANT

PHILADELPHIA, Pa., May 25. — Local newspapers have been completely silent about the most important local strike in many years — the strike of the United Auto Workers Local 813 at the Budd plant, largest industrial factory in Philadelphia.

The Budd management, which has always been the symbol of the open-shop in this city, brought things to a head early last week when they locked out a group of union welders for asking for higher wages. E. G. Budd refused to engage in any negotiations, and the union was forced to call its members out on strike.

Several thousand workers have already come out, with more departments and shops joining them every day. The entire local labor movement — CIO, AFL and Railroad Brotherhood — is supporting the strike, and with union truck drivers refusing to cross the picket line, materials are growing ever scarcer inside the plant.

The CIO has been trying to organize the plant for the last year and a half, and has had to face die-hard opposition and continuous discrimination. Numerous grievances have been taken to the NLRB and the WLB, but Budd stands firm, refusing to mediate and make any concessions. The union has called on the government to take over the plant, which formerly manufactured auto bodies and now has millions of dollars worth of war contracts, especially munitions.

The employers in Philadelphia have rallied to the support of Budd for the same reason that the labor movement has rallied to the support of Local 813 — because they realize that the

#### STRIKING CONTRAST

The striking contrast in conditions between the Budd plants in Philadelphia and Detroit is a perfect example of the difference between an open shop and a well organized shop.

Philadelphia welders get approximately 80 cents an hour, while in the Detroit plant they get \$1.28. Machine operators get about 75-80 cents an hour, while in Detroit they get \$1.25 an hour. In fact, the lowest wage in the Detroit plant, 88 cents an hour, paid to unskilled laborers, is about as much as the highest paid work-

### Bolivian Government Arrests Fourth International Leaders

Nine members of the Bolivian section of the Fourth International have been arrested by the Bolivian Security Police on the charge of "planning to overthrow the government," and others are being hunted, according to Bolivian and Argentine newspapers received here.

The newspaper *El Diario* of La-Paz, the Bolivian capital, carries an eight-column headline,

in its February 22 issue: "Fourth International was planning to overthrow the government." It reports that Trotskyists "cells" were operating in Potosi, Oruro, Cochabamba, Pulacayo and other mining towns, as well as in La Paz where the arrests took place.

The Assistant Chief of the Security Police, David Mollinedo, in an interview with *El Diario*, names among those arrested Humberto Perez Rocha and Oscar Alandia Pantoja, the latter identified as head of the La Paz "cell." A third named is an Argentine citizen, Carlos Ibarra Grasso. The names of the others arrested are not given.

According to the police the Party in the Philadelphia plant receive.

In addition, the Detroit shop has a complete system of seniority which protects workers from discrimination, while in the Philadelphia plant they are hired and fired at will.

These differences are not only a sign of what organization can gain for the workers, but also a direct incentive to organization of the Philadelphia plant and the winning of the strike.

### Bosses Get Roosevelt 'Hint' To Stall Wage Negotiations

Administration Putting Pressure On Union Heads to Accept 'Voluntary' Wage Freezing

President Roosevelt's April 28 declaration that the workers "will have to forego higher wages for the duration of the war" is shaping up in practice as a drive to hold up any general wage increases now. This drive is further intended to lay the basis for invalidating existing union contractual provisions and to force the union leaders into "voluntary" wage freezing agreements.

Roosevelt's latest move to block wage increases was his press statement on May 22 in connection with the report that three West Coast aircraft companies were prepared to offer wage increases. He stated that the government would do all in its power to prevent what he called "unwarranted" wage raises voluntarily granted by the employers.

Even where the corporations express willingness and ability to pay, as in the instance of the aircraft corporations, Roosevelt declared that no plant could be permitted to grant increases "which would make workers in other plants unhappy." (N. Y. Times, May 23.)

#### EFFECT OF FDR'S 'HINT'

Roosevelt's statement is generally regarded as a weighty 'hint' to the private companies to grant no further wage increases without sanction of the government. The general effect of this "hint" will be to strengthen the hand of the entire employing class in resisting the unions' demands for wage increases. It will encourage the employers to stall wage negotiations and insist that all wage disputes go before the War Labor Board or other government agencies.

The policies which the government is likely to follow were indicated last week by William Davis, WLB chairman. He stated that the administration is considering favorably the fixing of a maximum wage "ceiling" beyond which no increases would be granted. He cited \$25 a week as a possible maximum, along the lines of the wage-freezing "Canadian plan."

Such wage increases as might be granted in the "sub-standard" brackets, he stated further, will probably be limited to not more than 50 per cent of the cost of living increase since the fixing of the previous wage scale. This would follow the lines of the so-called "Chicago formula" in the national shipyard negotiations.

Another, which has received little newspaper notice, was Roosevelt's signing of a bill on May 14, suspending the Walsh-Healey Act provision requiring firms with government contracts to pay overtime rates for more than eight hours work a day where such is included in a union contract. This abrogates an important contractual obligation, and permits government contractors to work men 12 hours a day before paying overtime. In those industries affected by material shortages, such as steel, this will mean a direct wage cut for many workers. This, as well as the shipyard case directive, is in outright violation of Roosevelt's April 27 assurance that "existing contracts between employers and employees must, in all fairness, be carried out to the expiration dates of those contracts."

#### AIM AT 'VOLUNTARY' WAGE FREEZING

The aim of all these threatening moves is to put pressure on the trade union leaders to accept some form of "voluntary" wage freezing, disguised under the formula of "wage stabilization." Roosevelt prefers to fix wage levels by this method, rather than resort to compulsory measures which would intensify working class dissatisfaction with the administration and create a serious source of friction with the union movement.

#### A 'GOOD NEIGHBOR' FOLLOWS U. S. PATTERN

The reactionary Bolivian dictatorship, paraded as a sister "democracy" by Washington, is thus following in the footsteps of its Yankee master. The conviction of 18 members of the Socialist Workers Party and Local 544-CIO on "seditious conspiracy" charges in the infamous Minneapolis trial, in which sentences of sixteen and twelve months were handed down December 8, is the master pattern which is now being followed by the Bolivian reactionaries. In both cases the charge boils down to the fact that the victims are revolutionary Marxists, fighters for working class freedom.

This vicious blow against the Bolivian revolutionists serves to remind class-conscious American workers of the unity of the workers of the Americas against their common exploiter—Yankee imperialism and its "native" agents.

According to the March 1 *La*





