

# PRICES MINERS' WAGE STRUGGLE BRINGS ISSUE TO A HEAD!

## 'New Employer' Has Changed Nothing in the Mine Situation

AN EDITORIAL

Coal mines all over the country are flying the United States flag and are posted with signs bearing the legend: "United States Property." It is said that the miners have a new employer, the government. According to this, they are no longer working for their former employers, the coal companies, but for the government. However this may be, the fact of the matter is that nothing fundamental has been changed.

The miners are back at work on a fifteen-day truce arrangement. Their strike has NOT been called off. It has not been called off because their demands have not been met. They are at work in the mines today for the same wages and under the same working and living conditions which existed before they laid down their tools.

Their base pay is still \$7.00 a day. Prices are just as high, or higher, in the mine towns as before. Working conditions are just as hazardous and unjust as before. The operators will continue to get their profits. Nothing has changed yet.

Mr. Roosevelt's speech didn't change anything. His order instructing Mr. Ickes to take over the mines did not change wages or working conditions. The fact that Ickes is in control has not brought any new burst of freedom for the miners, nor caused a reduction of prices in company stores, nor given the wage increase necessary to maintain living standards at the present low level.

Mr. Roosevelt said that "the mines must and will operate." Perhaps they will. They are operating now under the fifteen-day truce. But these "miners are hungry" while they dig the coal.

The OPA announces that prices are "practically out of control." The miners and all other workers have known this for months. Prentiss Brown, director of the OPA, announced on the eve of the strike that prices would be "rolled back." Now he says they are "out of hand." Not only has nothing

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## 'Democracy' in Operation!



Carlo

## Wage Raises, Labor Control Of Prices Are Vital Needs-- Subsidy Plan a Subterfuge

By ALBERT GATES

The Office of Price Administration has announced a partial and piece-meal roll-back of prices. This fact alone is proof, if any proof was needed, that prices of the essential goods needed by the mass of people were away out of line with their wage standards. What the OPA has said in effect is that the high cost of living has risen beyond all their expectations, and beyond the ability of the people to live on their present wage levels.

On May 4, the United Press announced that "OPA officials admitted that prices, particularly in the food line, are practically out of control."

What does this statement mean? It means that the OPA

did not exercise control of prices. There were no real price ceilings. The profiteers, in the form of the big farmers, connected with big business, the big commission and wholesale concerns, the large food processors, the immense chain outfits, were having a price holiday at the expense of the overwhelming majority of the people!

## 5,000 Detroit Workers Hit Wage Freeze

DETROIT—Five thousand Detroit workers demonstrated against the high cost of living and the wage freeze in a "Thaw Out the Deep Freeze" mass meeting at Cadillac Square on Thursday, May 6. They came to this demonstration, the first against the government policy on wages and prices since the war started, in spite of poor last-minute publicity for the meeting and stayed to the end, in spite of a fine drizzle.

The rally was called by a joint CIO-AFL Labor Unity Committee. Speakers were Quinn, president of the Greater Detroit and Wayne County CIO Council; Richard T. Leonard, director of the UAW's Ford division; Tracy Doll, president of Labor's Non-Partisan League of Wayne County; with the keynote speeches made by Frank X. Martel, president of the Detroit and Wayne County Federation of Labor; and R. J. Thomas, president of the UAW.

Resolutions passed called for a (Continued on page 4)

Where was the OPA? Sitting on the sidelines watching the prices go up, and occasionally giving them a lift. The head of the OPA, Prentiss Brown, announced some months ago, that it was impossible to really control the prices of the most essential commodities, and that prices for these necessities of life would rise steadily month after month! Why, then, the sudden decision to roll back prices?

The answer is to be found in the heroic struggle of the United Mine Workers of America. It was the fight of the miners which called the attention of the whole country to the scandalous situation which exists on the price front. For this, the entire labor movement owes a debt of gratitude to the UMW. The miners' union declared the cost of living had mounted so high in their areas that, unless their wage demands were met, starvation would be rampant throughout the coal fields. It is a matter of life and death.

The demands of the miners met a cold response on the part of the coal operators, who are profiting out of the war effort. The operators were (Continued on page 3)

## Let the Bosses' Their Press and Their Stooges Howl-- It Is Labor's Duty to Give the Miners 100% Support!

By DAVID COOLIDGE

The present strike of the miners is the high point of a half century of almost continuous fighting by these workers to improve their working conditions, gain a decent standard of living and protection from injury and violent death by cave-in and explosion. To gain what little they have the coal diggers have been forced to go on strike almost every year since 1899.

All of these strikes were, like the present stoppage, concerned with wages and working conditions. They cover the administrations of eight Presidents from McKinley to the present Roosevelt. These mine strikes took place in peacetime and in wartime. In 1917-18, over 100,000 miners were on strike. In 1919, over 450,000 miners struck for a 60 per cent increase in pay. They

got 27 per cent. In 1935, over 400,000 participated in a strike, and the captive mine strike of 1942 called out 325,000.

The government, in 1919, was able to obtain an injunction making it mandatory that the strike stop. This was the first year that John L. Lewis was president of the UMWA, and William Green was secretary-treasurer. When the officers failed to call off the strike according to the injunction, they were cited for contempt. Before being brought to trial, however, the union officials submitted, Lewis taking the position: "We are Americans. We cannot fight our government."

What Victory Will Mean

It is interesting that, through all these years, the bosses have never been able to break this union; not

even with the aid of court injunctions, threatened prosecution, clubbing and murder by the coal and iron police, and assaults from the National Guard and the Regular Army. Through all this persecution, the privation of long and bitter strikes, the enmity of government officials and labor-hating judges, the miners' union stands today, stronger than ever, the rock of the American labor movement, the vanguard of the trade union movement in battling for the economic demands of labor in the United States.

Despite this, despite their long past of victories and hard-won struggles, the mine workers face the gravest danger now of their whole militant career. They can suffer a major defeat. And a defeat now for the miners means a set-back for the whole labor movement in the United States. No worker, no member of any union, should disregard this warning. If the miners win, it will be a victory for every worker, for every union.

The struggle being waged by the miners is a struggle against the Little Steel formula, against Roosevelt's "hold the line" decree and against substitution of government boards for the employer in collective bargaining procedure.

If the miners win, the Little Steel formula will be broken, the "hold the line" decree will have to be modified, the WLB will be reduced to a decorative committee with no real authority—and, above all, the ranks of labor will have received a lesson in the way a union should go about gaining its objectives.

The bosses and their stooges in

Congress and on the daily papers understand this. They are united as one man against any concessions being made to the mine workers. They know, and say, that if the miners get a wage increase, demands will come in from other unions which will have to be granted. These increases will cut into profits and reduce the amount available for dividends, big salaries, commissions

to war contract brokers, anti-labor propaganda, lobbying in Washington and bribes.

The Mongrel Press

The entire boss capitalist press is calling for the suppression of the miners and a denial of their demands. This is to be expected, and as it should be. There is no reason to expect the capitalist press to defend the interests of coal miners or

of any other workers. Hence the attitude of the New York Times, the New York Herald Tribune, the Chicago Tribune, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and the Scripps-Howard papers should surprise no one.

Perhaps the miners expected better treatment from that part of the capitalist press that poses as liberal and friendly to labor. For (Continued on page 4)

## Chicago, Buffalo, Detroit Lead Drive!

By HENRY COLEMAN (Campaign Director)

	Ninth Week: May 2-8 Returns	Per Cent of Total Quota Achieved
Detroit	12	202
Chicago	19	107
Buffalo	7	104
Streator	—	80
Akron	—	68
Los Angeles	16	65
New York	16	61
Cleveland	6	50
Reading	—	40
National Office	11	32
St. Louis & Missouri	3	30
Sierraville	—	27
Philadelphia	1	15
WEEKLY TOTAL	91	—
GRAND TOTAL	636	63.6

Going up! This week we doubled last week's total, and just barely missed hitting our 100-a-week quota. Next week it's got to be 100—no more playing around in the nineties! The percentages, which we put on the scoreboard for the first time, tell an interesting story. Each locality will draw its own conclusions. We only want to point out that the spread between 15 per cent and 202

percent is entirely too wide. Effort in the sub drive must be more equally divided. This does NOT mean that our champions can slow up. What is DOES mean is that the rest have got to catch up with them.

CHICAGO and BUFFALO go over the top on their quotas this week! They join DETROIT on the honor roll; Detroit did the trick 'way back on April 11. Who's next? Los Angeles comes through this week in the old style—a big improvement on last week. Chicago boosts its returns also. Detroit is up. But we seem to keep on repeating the same thing. When will we be able to talk about New York and Philadelphia and Cleveland?

ALL THIS ADDS UP TO ONE THING: SIX MORE WEEKS TO GO! WE'RE DOING THE JOB—LET'S FINISH IT UP RIGHT!

TO OUR NEW SUBSCRIBERS: We ask your indulgence if there has been a delay in getting the paper to you, or if you miss a copy. Write us about it, and we will fix it up. But we're short-handed at the office, and queer things happen in the mails these days. Bear with us. If you feel sore, send us a couple of subs and tell us exactly what you think of us. We can take it!

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## Next Week: 2 Pages on "Mission to Moscow"

Next week's LABOR ACTION will be a six-page issue! There will be a two-page insert taking apart Warner Brothers' scandalous distortion of history, "Mission to Moscow." Do you want to know what really happened at the Moscow Trials? Do you want to know why the Dewey Commission charged that the trials were frame-ups? Do you want to learn what Stalin's policy has been before, during and after the Stalin-Hitler pact? Do you want to know why this movie was produced? Do you want to know why we call it a "lend-lease offering to Stalin"? Be sure to get next week's copy of LABOR ACTION. Order bundles of this issue to give your friends and shop mates who see this monstrous movie.

The rest of the issue will again feature the miners' struggle. Don't miss the next issue of LABOR ACTION!





