



By David Coolidge

MASS ACTION:

BLACK MARKET IS NECESSARY FOR PROFITS

It has been my contention for some time that the use of the expression "black market," especially when applied to the meat situation, was incorrect. What is called the "black market" is nothing more nor less than the regular activity of "our system of free enterprise" carried on for profit-making under the "restrictions" laid down by the OPA. The so-called black market is a method used by the big packers, poultry raisers, canners and produce jobbers to raise prices despite the official price ceilings.

ures of their government to the end that they may be granted "legal" price increases. They do this by withholding meat from the market and by conspiring with the go-between shysters to run meat through "black market" dealers. And now comes one Arthur Winn, representative of the packers, to admit that all of this is true. Winn admitted in testimony before the Senate Banking Committee that many packers are violating price ceilings and are operating in the "black market." The packers don't like the OPA rulings and the price ceilings and they refuse to abide by them. They refuse to submit financial statements to the OPA. One can understand this when it is revealed that the profits of the meat people have jumped 700 per cent. (That's one for the capitalist press to write editorials about.)

The capitalist manufacturers and bankers are not impressed by the speeches of Murray and Thomas about the boys dying in Europe because they don't get enough supplies from the home front. They know that the purpose of the dying is to guarantee profits to U. S. "free enterprise." They are not fooled about this. They know that the best patriot is not the youth who dies on the battlefield but the man who remains at home and keeps the profits of capitalist industry at an all-time high. If you want to be a real patriot and go down in history as a man who served his country well the thing to do is to become a meat packer during war time, boost your profits 700 per cent, boost the cost of living 43 per cent while wages go up only half that amount and the boys die on the front by the hundreds of thousands.

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE LABOR FRONT

UE Local 425 Contract Below Par

NEW YORK — After six months of negotiations, Local 425, United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America, CIO, has reached an agreement with the Ford Instrument Co. of Long Island City. This contract falls far short of the seventeen-cent increase requested by the union, of the one-week severance pay for every six months of seniority, of the thirty-five hour week before layoffs are put into effect.

SOME CLAUSES Instead of the twelve weeks maximum severance pay, only two weeks was granted by the company and this clause placed in a special category of not being used as a precedent in any new negotiations; and not being

extended beyond December 31, the date of the new contract, should there be the necessity of extending the 1944 agreement until a new one is signed. Obviously even now the Ford management is trying to get out of it. Instead of a thirty-five-hour week before layoffs could be effected, a system of multiple occupational seniority in any department in which he has served for one year. Thus a man with five years of service in three departments, each for more than one year, has five years of seniority in each of these departments. Less than one year of seniority in a department removes him from that group. However, a transfer from a higher paying category back to a lower one (this affects those who have received promotional transfers—mainly the Negro workers, who hired in as unskilled and were subsequently transferred to skilled departments) means a corresponding cut in pay.

standard in negotiations set by Local 425 in the past. This has been the outstanding local in the UE for its militant stand on all questions. In a case testing the union's militancy last October, the local backed down. A shop steward was fired for discharging union business and the membership permitted the case to be dragged through six months of government red tape with no solution yet. This gave the company its go-ahead signal as far as the union was concerned. But far more important than this is the set of restrictions laid down by the War Labor Board. The company has been able to use these as an excuse for not meeting the very legitimate demands of the Ford workers. Consequently the union is stumped twice—once in negotiations and even that poor agreement is still likely to be cut more after it reaches the WLB.

permitted the Ford management to refuse the union's demands. Even if no strike took place, with that weapon ready to be used when needed, management would not be able to ride roughshod over union demands. END COLLECTIVE BEGGING Labor as a whole must return to collective bargaining rather than its present course of "collective begging." This means leaving the War Labor Board, whose restrictions on wages, in spite of the rising cost of living, have made it impossible for any local to achieve its demands. And labor must take back its strike weapon, without which it is paralyzed before the onslaught of capital. Local 425 alone cannot break this vise-like grip upon its militancy and its ability to give its members those conditions so necessary for a decent standard of living. But it can and must take its place with those locals of the American labor movement in achieving labor's goals.



Out of the Past Ira Steward, Champion of the Eight-Hour Day

Time and a half after forty hours of work is, for most workers in America, the law of the land. Time and a half after eight hours in any given day is a clause written into most union contracts. The eight-hour day is the norm in American industry.

labor unions in the fight. As a result of Steward's work, the Massachusetts Legislature passed a ten-hour law and in various industries the ten and later the eight-hour day was won. In time, Steward's "crazy notions" about the short work day became part of the platform of every union and social reformer.

cal action aimed at the conquest of state power by the workers can usher in socialism. Furthermore, the whole tendency of capitalist economy has been to create a giant army of unemployed (except in wartime), which in turn depresses wages. On the economic field the struggle becomes more and more a fight to keep wages at a subsistence level or a little above. Economic action is essential, but it must be linked with political action in order for the working class to achieve a better life.

By JESSIE KAAREN

Stockholders and financial experts who follow the back pages of the newspapers, where the financial news is normally buried, will not be surprised to learn that the profits of American department stores were 1,046 per cent higher in 1943 than in 1939. Nor will these same people be shocked to learn that while these fabulous profits were being made, wages for department store workers remained at their low pre-war levels. They will not be surprised or shocked because these tremendous profits by the department stores of the country only conform with the pattern set for all American industries, war or consumer, during the past few years.

sumer goods from rising, have a right to be shocked at the fraud and hypocrisy of that claim. They will ask, as they read the figures given below, why didn't some of that profit find its way into the pockets of some thirty-five-cents-an-hour department store employee? And they have a right to ask whose interests were being considered when ceiling prices were set—the interests of the consumer or those of the industrialist?

hour (which includes commission) for furniture salesmen. The survey published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that thousands of department store saleswomen earn about \$20 a week and that tens of thousands of department store workers receive less than fifty-five cents an hour. The smallest pay envelopes were found in the South, where many workers were receiving wages below thirty-five cents an hour.

head when it gives as the chief reason for the continued low wage rate of department store workers, their lack of unionization. There has always been a bad tendency within the "white collar class" (department store employees, office workers, telephone operators, etc.) to consider itself the aristocracy of the working class and to rely on government promises rather than on its own organized strength. This has hampered union organization in the past and has caused wages in this category to remain more rigid during the war than other wages.

Dep't Stores Aren't Doing Badly

Two reports have just been made public on department store operation in the last few years, one being released by the OPA and the other by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. They reveal that department store profits in 1943 were \$593,800,000, as compared with an annual average of \$51,800,000 in the peacetime period of 1936-39—an increase of 1,046 per cent.

Why the London Dockers Struck-- (Continued from page 1) ers, representative of the rank and file, who had come to hate it so deeply that they said they preferred the old system of casual labor.

The report hits the nail on the head and they are not prepared to be shoved around by men in offices with clean hands and white collars. They have had too much of that.

It is beginning to sound a platitude to say that the only solution lies in socialism. But it is true. The dockers have had their fight. They may win an amelioration of conditions when the enquiry is finished. They have demanded that it shall publish its findings by April 1st. But the real value of the strike lies in the demonstration of solidarity it meant.

NEW YORK MAY DAY CELEBRATION 5th of Workers Party and Anniversary Labor Action BUFFET DINNER... DANCING CARAVAN HALL 110 EAST 59th STREET NEW YORK CITY SUNDAY, APRIL 29th ADMISSION: DINNER... \$1.00 GENERAL... .25 DINNER AND PROGRAM 6:00 TO 9:00 P. M. DANCING TO 12:00 SPEAKERS: Shachtman, Gates, Coolidge, Lund, Craine, Bell and Others

Why the London Dockers Struck--

When the London Dock Labor Corporation was inaugurated, casual labor was abolished. Every docker got with his labor book a guaranteed minimum weekly wage of sixty-six shillings. In practice he has suffered intolerable indignities for that guaranteed sixty-six shillings a week. He has had to work where he was instructed, upon what work he was instructed to, under whatever conditions were defined. There has been no argument about it. He has been worked from eight in the morning until ten at night and sometimes all night. Any objections or alternative suggestions he might have made have been cut

short by the threat of suspension from work. And hundreds of dockers have been suspended time and again by the little Hitlers who quickly infested the system. How those Hitlers behaved only the docker can know. I only met a trade union official who had no pull over me except to be awkward. I tremble to imagine the indignities of working under the authority of the mean tyrants who have behind them all the repressive legislature of the total war state and the support of the trade union bureaucracy.

It is an appalling indictment of the new slavery that men should even begin to think that hunger is preferable to dog-like security. It is a warning to those Morrissonian socialists who want a system of public corporations and would call that socialism! It is an urgent call to the libertarian socialists to insist that socialism is more than slavish security from hunger. There is a price beyond which even security is no longer valuable!

More thoughtful dockers have not suggested a return to the old ways of scrambling for work. They want the guaranteed wage—yes, and more than sixty-six shillings a week, but they also want freedom from bureaucratic tyranny. They work damned

De Lorenzo

Rank and File group of the Auto Workers and has long tried to free the unions from the strangling no-strike pledge. The Navy and a congressional investigating committee worked hard to break Local 365 and De Lorenzo by persecution and phony charges. Finally, all else failing, Navy contracts at Brewster were cancelled—this "cutback" later resulted in one of those famous aircraft "shortages" of not so long ago—and hundreds lost their jobs. Then, out of the congressional investigation, came the prosecution of De Lorenzo and his conviction on very trifling charges. But the local and De Lorenzo continued their life of "crime." That is, they went out and organized other plants in the New York area, becoming bargaining agency for six companies besides Brewster.

Henry Ford II

may mean, at the Great Lakes Station, not too far from home. HE'S "NECESSARY" AT HOME Soon after the death of his father, Edsel Ford, in 1943, he was put on inactive service by the Navy. The release was a very quiet job, too—not much publicity. Harry Bennett, Ford's strong-arm man and a self-confessed contributor to fascist causes, later said that nobody in the family or company suggested Henry's release. The late Secretary of the Navy, big business man Frank Fox (according to Bennett), said that it was more important for Henry to shoulder some of the responsibility for the vast war-production work of Ford's than to serve in the Navy. "Henry did as he was told." (Fortune magazine, June, 1944) Every morning Henry has been hurrying to work on a bicycle perhaps?—Ed. from his \$52,000 home, arriving before 8:30 (Newsweek, April 24, 1944). In about six months, never having assumed responsibility before, he became a vice-president. Three months after that, he became executive vice-president, second only to his grandfather in the great Ford Empire. "Henry plans no changes now. The future naturally dominates his mind." (Fortune, June, 1944) How, then, is he aiding the "war effort?" Thinking of the next war?

THE VISIONARY

The visionary is an animal that believes in spirits. It is in general a good-natured animal (although there are some vicious specimens), that holds belief in spirits the only worthwhile belief. It is connected with the outside world through various organs as, for example, "The Militant." The Militant on March 24 printed the following message from a visionary: "The DACHAU concentration camp, one of the largest prisons for revolutionary and communist workers, has become a center of struggle against the Nazi régime." Believe it or not, but the Militant has become a center for the slogan: BELIEVE IT OR NOT! It could only happen at 116 University Place, near Broadway.

BUY LABOR ACTION IN DETROIT:

Carl's Bookstore Woodward at Clairmont Note on Ford Election! The headline on the Ford Bomber election story last week indicated that a progressive group had won out. Actually this was not the case as the story made clear. The election merely defeated the Stalinist-Communist leader and some of his followers. Actually the new administration is pursuing a reactionary policy. The struggle of the progressive unionists in the local is still ahead of them.

CHICAGO MAY DAY MEETING Celebrate with the Chicago Branch of the Workers Party TUESDAY, MAY 1, 8:00 P. M. HOTEL MIDLAND, Walnut Room, ADAMS AT WELLS'



