

Labor News From Coast to Coast

Our Overseas Column

Building Workers—Germany

The wage negotiations for the German building trade have reached a deadlock, it being found impossible to come to an agreement about working hours. The workers' representatives declared at the outset that the first condition for the conclusion of a fresh national agreement must be the recognition of eight hours as the maximum working day. After long negotiations no agreement could be reached on this point; the proposals of the Conciliation Board (an independent body, not prejudiced on either side) were rejected, so that the negotiations must be regarded as having finally shipwrecked.

Miners—Holland

The Joint Commission, consisting of representatives of the various mining companies and miners' organizations has for some time been negotiating for the settlement of a fresh wage agreement. The employers at first proposed a 10 per cent wage cut and a slight shortening of working hours; or, as an alternative, an increase in working hours. The miners refused the offer, and proposed that both they and the mining companies should petition the Government for a 25 per cent reduction of freight, provided that the mining companies would undertake to maintain the existing wages for another year. The petition was accordingly sent in. The Government replied by promising to lower freights by 10 per cent, and to abrogate temporarily its present levy of a tax of 25 cents per ton on the coal output (of which 50 per cent goes to the state, 40 per cent to the Province of Limburg, 10 per cent to the municipalities of the coal district. This offer means a loss to the Treasury of 700,000 and 1,320,000 guilders respectively under the two counts. In view of it, the employers have consented to limit the wage cut to 5 per cent. Thanks to the lack of unity of the Dutch trade union movement, the miners are not agreed as to their policy. The Socialist miners' union refuses the 5 per cent wage cut, but the Protestant miners' union, at a meeting of executives on March 15, accepted the offer by 51 to 27 votes, provided that the wages fixed should remain in force for another 9 months. Rumor has it that the coal owners will refuse this condition, on the fuse ground that the coal market is now so precarious that they cannot bind themselves for so long a period. The outcome of the matter is still uncertain.

Mexico

An American mine manager in Mexico recently tried to introduce into Mexico, American methods of browbeating workers, but with unexpected results. He issued an order forbidding his workers to combine, on pain of immediate dismissal. But he had forgotten to study the Mexican Constitution, which guarantees this right to the workers. The workers concerned hereafter applied to the authorities, with the result that on the basis of Article 33 of the Constitution, the manager was deported from the country as an "undesirable alien."

U. S. A.

The West Virginian coal field is the scene of a long drawn out struggle between employers and workers. In some cases the strikers are entering their third year, (in other the workers have only recently come out.) Many of the first class have found other work to support them, but still there is a small army of almost 20,000 persons dependent on the aid of the United Mine Workers who house them in shacks and tents, and issue them rations just sufficient to support life. The strikers have been turned out of their homes, which were the property of the mining companies.

The cause of the dispute is the following. An agreement was signed at Jacksonville, Florida, in 1924 fixing the average day rate for West Virginian miners at about \$3.50 and the average tonnage rate at about 84 cents. Since then, however, the mine operators have pursued a deliberate policy of employing non-union men. The wages in the non-union fields dropped as low as \$2.80 per day in one particular field where the operators use deputy sheriffs and mine guards to prevent by force any sort of organization. Moreover, in the non-union fields so many deductions rendered a large number of popular are made from pay for different reasons that the workers are left too indignant to seek other employment. Hence the struggle in West Virginia is a kind of crucial battle between unionism and non-unionism in the coal fields. Moreover, some of the agreements made have been shamelessly broken by the employers. John L. Lewis, the president of the United Mine Workers of America, has just returned from a tour of the West Virginian coal fields. He announces the fixed determination of the union not to change its policy and accept any reduction in wages. He declared

himself "astounded at the preparations made to intimidate, coerce and browbeat trade union miners by the non-union coal companies. I could not believe my eyes," he said, "when I saw searchlights and machine guns mounted and swashbuckling gunmen parading around." It is further stated that officials of the United Mine Workers have undisputed evidence that a conspiracy exists to exterminate the union.

West Virginia and Kentucky Men's Union has now submitted to the union a proposal to put an end to the present chaos by forming a single national federation comprising all four existing federations, the constitution for the new federation be drawn up later on. The Railwaymen's Union Executive has approved the proposal, which will be discussed at the next congress. In the interests of all concerned, it is to be hoped that one national centre will be formed.

Politics and Trade Unions in Mexico
To prevent local strikes from being proclaimed by political agitators, the Mexican Federation of Trade Unions has ordered that unions must no longer call strikes on their own initiative; they must first of all consult the Executive of the National Centre.

Refusal of Research Tour to Russia
The Federation of Polish Trade Unions has refused the invitation of the All-Russian Trade Union Council to send a delegation to Russia to study the economic position of the Russian workers on the ground that, in view of "the political conditions prevailing in Russia" they feel no confidence that the delegation would have freedom of movement.

Unemployment in Russia

Recently "Trud" (the Russian trade union journal) published an article on unemployment in Russia, from which the following information is taken:—
On January 1st, 1925, 658,000 unemployed persons were on the unemployment registers. Of this total, 29.1 per cent were industrial workers, 31.8 per cent non-manual workers, and 24 per cent casual workers, while 15.7 per cent belong to various other groups. 22.6 per cent of the whole number were receiving unemployment benefit from the Public Unemployment Funds. The percentage of those receiving unemployment benefit from the trade unions is not known to the writer of the article, but he believes it to be only small, and in any case below the percentage receiving unemployment benefit from public funds.

With regard to relief work, it is stated that in the year 1923-24, work was found for 51371 unemployed persons in 14 towns for a total of 1,283,448 days. The average wage was 1 rouble and 70 kopeks. Throughout Soviet Russia 2,450,000 roubles was expended in the year 1923-24 on wages for unemployed.
During the year 1924-25, 4,000,000 roubles have so far been paid in wages to 60,000 unemployed for a total of 3,000,000 days. It may be assumed that this amount has been increased by 50 per cent from local sources, so that the total sum will have sufficed to pay for 4,500,000 working days. But in general the amount of work provided was insufficient. In order to supplement it, collections had to be made throughout the country for the benefit of the unemployed. By October 1st, 1924, 1,448 collections had been organized, in which 50,000 persons took part. The amount collected was sufficient to provide 50,000 unemployed with a monthly allowance of 32 roubles and 50 kopeks for a whole year.
But in the opinion of the writer all these efforts to provide the requisite assistance for the unemployed are inadequate.

Germany

Chemnitz Textile Industry.—There has been such a lack of female skilled help in the Chemnitz textile industry, that it has been necessary to secure employees from far distant employment offices.

Spain

Improved Labor Conditions.—Since the present Government came into power in the Bilbao district, it is stated that there has been a complete absence of strikes and labor disorders and, on the other hand, a decided betterment in the rate of production in most industries.

U.S. Ambassador Had to Walk

Mexico City, Mex.—Organized labor gave a remarkable demonstration of its power in Mexico City May Day. American Ambassador J. R. Sheffield was forced to walk to work, his chauffeur having been warned that he could not operate the official embassy automobile between 9 a. m. and 3 p. m. There was a complete cessation of work and a series of huge labor demonstrations.

Building Trades

Des Moines, Iowa.—All matters in dispute in the building trades situation have now been amicably adjusted, and peace is assured for the coming year. In addition to settlements reported previously, the following crafts have now signed up: Sheet metal workers, electrical workers, hod carriers and laborers, and painters, plumbers and steamfitters. The hoisting engineers have secured an increase from \$9 to \$10 per day, effective July 1, 1925. Other crafts have accepted the terms of last year's agreement.

Plumbers

Wilkes-Barre, Pa.—The plumbers at Wilkes-Barre, Pa., who went on strike for \$1 per day increase, have resumed work at the new rate after a five days' suspension.

Textile Workers

Chicopee, Mass.—The trouble at the Dwight Manufacturing Company at Chicopee, Mass., is practically over. These textile workers struck in resistance to a ten per cent reduction in the industry. The strikers have drifted back to work on the company's terms until conditions have about reached normal.

Tugboat Men et al

Baltimore, Md.—On April 1, 125 tugboat men, inner harbor, Baltimore, Md., struck for increased pay, followed by 200 masters and mates striking in sympathy on April 8. Adjustment conferences were opened by two Commissioners on April 11. The men have been ordered back to work by their officers while negotiations continue. Agreement was reached on April 13, to be ratified by the local unions on April 14. The agreement provides for a 10 per cent wage increase, time and one-half for all overtime, standing committee to adjust grievances, and a signed agreement for one year. This strike seriously interfered with the manufacturing industries of Baltimore harbor. In all, 800 men, including deck hands, marine engineers, firemen, etc. were directly and indirectly affected.

Boston, Mass.—The Joint Conference of the Building Trades Unions and the Building Men's Association, of Boston, have reached an agreement which has been ratified by the unions, and is expected to be ratified by the Association. It provides that the old agreement be renewed for a three-year period, with the understanding that the wage question be referred to arbitration next year.

Unemployment in G.B. on Increase

London, Eng.—The April summary of British trade issued by the United States Chamber of Commerce in London enumerates the various features of the budget statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Winston Churchill, but indulges in no prophesies as regards the results to be expected from the policies outlined.

The British coal trade is extremely depressed, the report says, with more than 400 pits closed, and 160,000 miners idle.

The total unemployment in the country is 1,202,700, or 152,154 over the same period last year.

Slight improvement is noted in the production of pig iron, which exceeded that of March by 70,000 tons. The steel output was 40,000 tons greater. Tin plate on the other hand showed only a 75 per cent output.

The Scottish shipbuilders during April launched twenty-eight vessels, totalling 94,517 tons, but the shipping industry is still depressed, according to the summary.

A joint permanent committee representing all sections of the employers in that industry has been formed. Curtailed production continues at thirty-five hours weekly.

The report also notes a great increase in unemployment among the wool textile operatives.

Labor in the U.S.

Carpenters

Des Moines, Iowa.—A dispute over renewal of agreement, affecting 2,300 men, was adjusted by providing for last year's rates and working conditions to be in effect during 1925.

Jurisdictional Dispute

Indianapolis, Ind.—The jurisdictional trouble between bricklayers and plasterers over cork work was reported by Commissioner Dynes as having been adjusted on basis of division of work between the two crafts concerned. About one hundred men were affected.

Painters

Pittsburgh, Pa.—Commissioner Thomas reports adjustment of dispute affecting painters in Pittsburgh and vicinity. The men demanded an increase of \$1 per day, making the rate \$12 per day. A compromise agreement provides rate of \$11.50 per day.

Plumbers

Indianapolis, Ind.—Indianapolis plumbers asked for increase in wages for coming fiscal year. Arrangement was made, however, providing for the

renewal of last year's agreement at the old rate. About three hundred Pittsburgh, Pa. Demands by the m

Steamfitters

Pittsburgh, Pa.—Commissioner Thomas reports an adjustment of the controversy affecting the steamfitters in men were directly involved. Included an increase from \$11 to \$12 per day. Settlement provides for an increase to \$11.50 per day until November 1, 1925, thence \$12 per day. About 400 men were involved.

London.—James Kirkwood, M.P. Labor representing Clydeside, declared in commons that it is impossible for Great Britain to pay £1,000,000 daily war debt and provide comfortable living conditions for workers. He suggested that repudiation of the debt was the only solution.



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Savings Bank Account No. 744		DATE	DEBIT	CREDIT	BALANCE
1920	Jan 1			50.00	50.00
	Feb 1			1.00	51.00
	Mar 1			1.00	52.00
	Apr 1			1.00	53.00
	May 1			1.00	54.00
	Jun 1			1.00	55.00
	Jul 1			1.00	56.00
	Aug 1			1.00	57.00
	Sep 1			1.00	58.00
	Oct 1			1.00	59.00
	Nov 1			1.00	60.00
	Dec 31				60.00
1921	Jan 1				60.00
	Feb 1			1.00	61.00
	Mar 1			1.00	62.00
	Apr 1			1.00	63.00
	May 1			1.00	64.00
	Jun 1			1.00	65.00
	Jul 1			1.00	66.00
	Aug 1			1.00	67.00
	Sep 1			1.00	68.00
	Oct 1			1.00	69.00
	Nov 1			1.00	70.00
	Dec 31				70.00

Both started five years ago with \$50. One has remained dormant through neglect, the other shows a substantial balance gained by regular deposits of \$10 a month—a sum most people squander monthly on trifles.

Which is yours?

The Royal Bank of Canada