

TASKS OF THE MINERS' CONVENTION

By BERT WOLFE

THE United Mine Workers of America is now holding its 30th convention—the first general convention of the union to be held in three years. It promises to be the most important convention in the history of the organization. It comes on the eve of an expected strike. It comes at a time when the union has lost nearly 200,000 members and the control of the southern bituminous fields under the misleadership of Mr. Lewis.

The report of the United States Bureau of Mines, made public yesterday, indicates that over 65% of the soft coal being produced in the country on December 31, 1925 (the date of the survey) was from non-union mines and that over 61% of the miners employed in the production of soft coal were not members of the union and were working in mines not under the union's control.

Figures Prove Lewis Failed.

This evidence of the failure of Mr. Lewis' administration is made public by the government on the eve of the convention with the intention of discouraging the demand for a strike. It will be argued by those opposing a strike that even if the strike is 100% effective, it can close less than 35% of the producing units and can call out less than 40% of all the miners in the industry. If the policies of Mr. Lewis are again followed, this is no doubt correct, for Lewis has never made an earnest attempt to organize the non-union fields.

Genuine Strike Will Win.

The hope for a real struggle and a real defense of the miners' interests can come only if the progressive elements, which are sure to have a considerable number of delegates at the convention, are able to force a policy of a genuine strike of the entire industry in which a determined effort is made to organize the unorganized fields and make the U. M. W. of A. once more a union controlling the entire industry.

The only obstacle to this is the cowardly and even treacherous leadership of Mr. Lewis because no one, who knows the spirit of the men employed in the mining industry, can doubt but that an honest call to them and a determined effort to organize them would meet with an immediate and enthusiastic response. They are not non-union miners by choice but thru the deliberate neglect of Mr. Lewis and his machine to organize them.

Lewis Fights Union.

Lewis has displayed great weakness in his struggle with the coal owners but great strength and fighting spirit when it comes to struggling with the rank and file of his own union and their demands and interests.

The administration tactics have been ruthless. Opposition leaders like Alexander Howat of Kansas, whose only crime was that they wanted the union to put up a real fight on behalf of the miners' interests, have been barred as candidates for office and even expelled from the union for long periods. Others have been bought off. Even conservative opposition of elements no less corrupt than Lewis, such as Farrington, have been eliminated.

New Opposition Rises.

But just when Lewis thought that he had completely destroyed all opposition, was the unchallenged czar of the U. M. W. to rule and ruin it as he saw fit, Lewis finds himself faced with the most serious challenge in the last six years. All the worthwhile elements of the U. M. W. union, all those who see the impending disaster that Lewis has been preparing so long, all those who still believe that the union can be saved and made strong and again regain control of the entire industry—have at last united and found real leadership, headed by John Brophy, the progressive President of district two, supported by William Stevenson, member of the National Executive Board, William Brennan, former president of the largest anthracite district of Pennsylvania, and other such substantial elements whose devotion to the interest of the miner cannot be questioned. All elements that have the fate of their union at heart have been rallying together in the "Save the Union" committee, demanding the organization of the lost union fields; demanding a fighting policy which would not be stopped by company gunmen and court injunctions; demanding effective resistance to wage cuts; demanding democratization of the union which has become czar-ridden and boss-ridden; demanding the reinstatement of those elements which were expelled merely for their devotion to the interests of the rank and file of the U. M. W. and whose expulsion drains the union of its life blood and its fighting spirit and desiring the union struggle for such larger aims as the nationalization of the coal mines and the development of a Labor Party movement which will make nationalization and the abolition of labor injunctions two of their cardinal demands.

Check Up Vote Count

The miners must also demand a reckoning of the brazen election steel just put thru by Mr. Lewis. Over a month has passed since the election and no tabulated returns have been given out by the national office. The opposition is defying Lewis to give out a tabulated report of the returns, local by local, and Lewis does not dare comply with this simple and elementary privilege of every voting body to get full returns.

Miscount Easy

It is just as if the Tammany machine in New York were to announce that its candidate had been elected but were to refuse to give the vote by election districts where watchers had tabulated and would be able to check up the honesty of the returns. The mere fact that Lewis refuses to give such a return is sufficient evidence that Brophy really carried the election.

Members Pay

So that one of the fundamental issues before this convention is the issue of honesty in union administration; of the right of the rank and file who pay the dues, who fight the fights of the union and have built it and who somehow manage to maintain it despite neglect, treachery and open hostility, to elect their own officers and to remove from office a self-perpetuating clique that have neglected and even betrayed their interests.

Finally, it is to be hoped that out of the present convention comes, along with a constructive program and along with progress toward the democratization of the union, the unifying on a permanent basis of all progressive forces, of all honest unionists who love the union which to them has been and must again become a shield for defense and a weapon for the improvement of the condition of the men who toil in the mines.

PHILADELPHIA

MAKERS T. U. E. L.

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the future The DAILY come more influential working class, for whose fighting.