
THE STRIKE OF THE COAL MINERS

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The Course of the Strike

ON MAY 1 the United States, deep in its battle for survival against the attack of the Axis powers, found itself confronting a national strike of coal miners. According to U. S. official figures, 480,110 mine workers were pulled out on strike throughout the entire Appalachian region, including some 80,000 anthracite miners. The strike was practically solid, only isolated local unions here and there remaining at work in the strike area.

The strike constituted a grave and immediate menace to the national war effort. Stocks of soft coal above ground were relatively small, and the threat of a widespread shutdown of war industries loomed in the near future. It was estimated that the steel mills in the Pittsburgh area would begin drastically to cut production after three or four days. Other basic industries were in a similar predicament. The government called upon the railroads, the largest single users of coal in the United States, to institute important coal economies immediately. The whole war production program of the government was in jeopardy.

Reactionaries, while covertly provoking and welcoming the strike as a blow at the Roosevelt war administration, were quick to seize upon it as a pretext to intensify their union-smashing campaign. In various state legislatures anti-strike legislation was quickly introduced. The Senate also rushed through the Connally Bill to prohibit strikes in plants under United States control, while in the House, the Connally Bill has been amended in committee to include the infamous Smith Bill and is scheduled to be voted on very shortly. As for the fascist radio and newspaper propagandists in Berlin, Rome and Tokyo, they shouted in glee that the strike proved there was no national unity in the United States, that the workers were against the war, and that the American war effort was about to collapse. Naturally, our own war allies, as indicated in the British and Soviet press, were astounded and dismayed by the strike. The *London Daily Telegraph* expressed a widely-held opinion when it said:

"The war seems very far away from the American coal fields."

Labor and American public opinion in general sympathized with the

economic complaints of the miners, but sharply condemned the strike. Almost universally, union leaders supported the demands of the miners, but there was mounting condemnation of the anti-war strike as a means for winning them. C.I.O. President Philip Murray, in a speech at Los Angeles, emphatically stated that the organized workers under his leadership would honor the no-strike-in-wartime pledges given by the labor movement after Pearl Harbor. A. F. of L. President William Green assured the government that the Progressive Miners in Illinois would not strike. R. J. Thomas, President of the United Auto Workers, while endorsing the miners' demands, openly repudiated their strike, declaring that "there is no doubt in my mind that this is a political strike—a strike against President Roosevelt. During the period of Lewis' so-called 15-day truce the C.I.O. National Executive Board strongly reaffirmed its no-strike pledge and condemned Lewis' unpatriotic strike action. In the same period the A. F. of L. Executive Council held a meeting and likewise renewed its no-strike pledge, although Mr. Green weakened the Council's stand by stating later that each affiliated A. F. of L. union would decide for itself as to whether or not it should strike. This reflects the influence of Woll, Hutcheson, and Lewis' friends within the A. F. of L. top leadership.

The Communist Party spoke out sharply against the strike as an insidious blow by Lewis against the nation's war effort. It pointed out that with the nation at war and

with labor's destiny bound up with the nation's victory, to tie up the industries by strikes means to hit the vital interests of labor itself. The *Daily Worker* of May 2 said: "The entire labor movement, vitally concerned in this crisis, must give full support to the Commander-in-Chief in his move to ensure the coal supply. It must join him in calling on the miners to go back to work, to repudiate Lewis and submit their case to the War Labor Board. It must urge the government to secure the enforcement of its proposals for a full year's employment, to roll back prices, and to grant the miners an impartial hearing on their other demands."

The strike was not formally called, but was developed by Lewis upon the failure of the U.M.W.A. and the coal operators to agree upon a new contract. The mines were tied up on the basis of "no contract, no work." The miners' demands, presented to the Appalachian bituminous coal operators prior to the expiration of their agreement on March 31, included a \$2-per-day wage increase and the incorporation of 60,000 mine bosses and office workers under the union agreement. The operators refused all the union's demands. Whereupon John L. Lewis, claiming that the National War Labor Board had prejudged the miners' case because allegedly it was committed to the Little Steel Formula, refused to submit the miners' case to that body. After much haggling, a month's extension of negotiation time was grudgingly agreed upon by Lewis. Meanwhile, the anthracite miners, whose agreement

expired on April 30, had come to a deadlock with their employers over the \$2-per-day increase. Thus there was a complete breakdown of negotiations in both the soft and hard coal fields, with the deadline for a general automatic stoppage set for May 1. Mr. John Steelman, on behalf of Secretary of Labor Perkins, proposed to settle the dispute by the establishment of a guaranteed yearly wage for the miners. The U.M.W.A. accepted this, but the mine operators rejected it, just as Lewis had several months before when Secretary Ickes had originally proposed the 6-day work week. As a device to avoid responsibility for calling the strike, Lewis announced that the miners never worked without a union agreement and that therefore, unless an agreement was duly arrived at, they would not "trespass" on the companies' properties after April 31. Large numbers of the men in the pits, however, under the instigation of Lewis officials, began striking, so that by the time May 1 arrived, when the general walkout began, at least 100,000 were already out on strike.

The Federal Government went into action on May 2. President Roosevelt, having previously pleaded in vain with the miners not to strike, seized the mines in the name of the government, hoisted the American flag over them and, in the following words, ordered Solid Fuels Administrator Harold L. Ickes to see to it that they were operated:

"The Secretary of the Interior is authorized and directed to take im-

mediate possession, so far as may be necessary or advisable, of any and all mines producing coal in which a strike has occurred or is threatened."

The President, while speaking in a friendly tone to the miners and acknowledging they had economic grievances which had to be attended to, nevertheless minced no words in calling the walkout a strike against the government. He said, "No matter how sincere his motives, no matter how legitimate he may believe his grievances to be—any idle miner, directly and individually, is obstructing our war effort." The President also stated that the mines would be operated, even if it took soldiers to guarantee it. He put the question of the war and the nation's safety first, and on this basis called for an immediate return to work the next day, May 3.

In the meantime, asserting that he had come to a satisfactory understanding with Mr. Ickes (which the latter afterwards denied), Lewis declared a 15-day "truce" and ordered the miners to return to work on Tuesday, May 4. The bulk of the workers, however, visibly influenced by the President's radio speech, went back on Monday, the 3rd, not waiting for Lewis' Tuesday date. By May 4 all the mines were operating again. After which, Mr. Ickes announced the establishment of the 6-day week (time-and-one-half for Saturday) in the mining industry. And there, at this writing, the situation stands, with the War Labor Board considering the miners' demands.

Economic Factors in the Strike

It is clear that John L. Lewis did all he could to provoke this sensational wartime strike; but it is also obvious that, despite his autocratic control of the miners, he never could have succeeded in pulling out the men so completely, in the face of the war situation and President Roosevelt's plea not to strike, if the miners had not had very substantial economic grievances. These grievances are akin to those of tens of millions of other American workers. They may be summed up in a few words—relatively stationary wages in a situation of rapidly rising living costs.

The basic cause of the present widespread discontent among the workers, of which the miners' strike has been the sharpest expression, is the fact that the anti-Administration bloc of appeasers, defeatists, profiteers, union-busters and poll-taxers in Congress, backed by powerful outside forces such as the N.A.M., the Hearst-Howard-Patterson newspapers, etc., have been able, so far, to defeat the effective application of President Roosevelt's 7-point program of economic stabilization. This program, presented to Congress a year ago by the President, proposed to control the major economic factors making for inflation. It included (1) the maximum taxation of profits, and the limitation of executives' salaries to \$25,000 yearly; (2) the placing of ceilings upon all items affecting the cost of living; (3) the stabilization of farm prices on a parity basis; (4) the stabilization of

wages at levels assuring the health and efficiency of the workers; (5) the rationing of foodstuffs and other necessities of the people; (6) the cessation of installment buying, the payment of debts, and the increase of savings; and (7) the maximum general sale of war bonds.

With the exception of points 5 and 6, this economic program has been torpedoed by the defeatist opposition. The \$25,000 salary directive by the President was canceled by Congressional action, and there is an orgy of profiteering going on throughout the country; the net profits of corporations, after all taxes have been paid, having increased from \$4,200,000,000 in 1939 to \$7,600,000,000 in 1942. Price ceilings are "more honored in the breach than in the observance"; farm prices are being systematically jacked up by the phony Farm Bloc; the profiteering defeatists are now trying desperately to jam the Ruml plan through Congress; would "forgive" the profit-swollen corporations their 1942 taxes; the rationing system, still sketchy in character, was introduced only after shameless profiteering in necessary foodstuffs; while anything like direct profits limitations, as the 6 per cent limit suggested a year ago by Secretary Morgenthau, is strictly out. The line of the Congressional oppositionists is to give capital a relatively free hand, while nailing labor down tight. Hence their vast enthusiasm and pressure for measures to freeze labor's wages and freeze war workers to their jobs. Likewise they are engaging in violent attacks upon the legal status

of labor organizations, in Congress and the various state legislatures.

The general result of the opposition bloc's Congressional policy, forced upon the Administration, of economically soaking labor and facilitating widespread profiteering, is that we have developed a lopsided economy. The general characteristics of this are that the country is fast heading into inflation and that the living standards of the masses are in decided decline. It is estimated by government reports that living costs in April were 24 per cent above pre-war levels. They are still rising, but the President has now pledged a "roll back" in prices, and has taken certain steps to effect this. The A. F. of L. claims that the increase, as over January 1, 1941, amounts to 33 per cent. As against this rapid increase in living costs, under the Little Steel Formula of the National War Labor Board, which was figured upon the basis of the price levels of January 1, 1941, the workers were allowed wage increases amounting only to 15 per cent, which was manifestly far below the actual rise in living costs, and which also did not take into account the added financial drains upon the workers caused by increased taxes, war fund contributions, bond purchases, etc. Additional income from longer work hours did not offset this opening scissors between living costs and wages.

The coal miners were among the worst sufferers in the increasingly unfavorable economic situation of the workers as a whole. To begin with, they were working at wage levels substantially below those in

various war industries. And then, the rise in living costs was particularly swift in mining communities. According to the U.M.W.A. statements, widely printed as advertisements throughout the press of America, the overall price increase of foodstuffs in the mining areas had run up to 124.6 per cent, and food, to the miners with their relatively large families, amounts to from 60 to 70 per cent of their total living costs. Obviously, the wages of the miners, did not balance off the steep rise in the miners' general living rates. The inevitable consequence was a spreading poverty and a growing discontent among the miners, factors which were utilized by Lewis to provoke the recent national strike.

Political Factors in the Strike

Despite their already difficult and steadily worsening economic situation, however, it is extremely unlikely that the miners would have walked out were it not for direct strike provocation by John L. Lewis. The coal miners are patriotic citizens; they realize the menace of Hitlerism; about 80,000 of their sons and brothers are already in the armed services; and they ardently want to win the war. So much so, that if left to their own devices, they naturally would have proceeded to every means of patient negotiation and adjustment, rather than to strike. The plain fact of the situation was that John L. Lewis, taking advantage of the miners' legitimate economic grievances and the slowness of certain government agencies in adjusting them, literally rushed the workers into the strike

for his own reactionary political reasons.

The central political objective behind Lewis' carefully built-up strike, was the same as that of the defeatist Congressional bloc: namely, to obstruct our nation's war effort. The obstructionist activities of the Wheelers, Tafts, Fishes and Vandenberg in Congress and Mr. Lewis' disruptive strike policy in the industries definitely complement each other. They are two phases of the same thing: opposition to the war policy of the Government. The Lewis-Hoover line is one that would lead, not to the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers, but to a "negotiated peace" with the fascist aggressors, and hence, to the defeat of the United Nations.

The political offensive of the appeasers and defeatists within our country for a negotiated peace with the fascists is now being pressed with renewed vigor. Hitler, with the prospects of military victory fast fading, is now moving everything for a "peace" that would give him a breathing spell in which to get ready for a new attempt at world conquest. General Franco, who recently lyingly stated that the war had come to a stalemate and that there must be a "negotiated peace," is a mouthpiece of Hitler. The line of the Hoover-Taft-Wheeler bloc in Congress and of John L. Lewis fits right in with this general slave-peace strategy of Hitler.

Lewis' record and his present activity admit of no other conclusion than that he is playing Hitler's negotiated-peace game. Through his

daughter he was a roundabout affiliate of the notorious America First Committee. He was also formerly a member of the Republican National Committee and is now an intimate crony of the big-shot Republican defeatists. Ever since the United States became involved in the war his house organ, the *Mine Workers Journal*, has waged unceasing attacks upon the Roosevelt Administration and upon our British and Soviet allies. Lewis himself has given only lip-service to our war cause and his influence has kept the war activities of the U.M.W.A. down to the barest minimum that he could get away with. In the vital matter of increasing coal production, his agents started out with widespread propaganda to the effect that there was no production problem in the mining industry. His union administration has sabotaged the formation of labor-management committees, it opposes an incentive wage in the coal industry, and it has not yet enunciated a real program for increased coal production. The measures that have been adopted to step up coal output, such as the establishment of the six-day week, have been virtually forced upon Lewis by Solid Fuels Coordinator Ickes and the Roosevelt Administration.

Lewis wanted and plotted the coal strike for the same general defeatist purpose that the opposition bloc in Congress is trying to hamstring the war activities of the Roosevelt Administration. Hitler could hope for nothing better than the paralysis of American industry by strikes. The big thing Lewis

wanted to accomplish by the strike was to break down the no-strike pledge of organized labor and to throw the industries into a series of stoppages, the general effect of which could be none other than to cripple and reduce war production. To this end, as preparations for a broad strike movement, Lewis shouted that the President's seven-point economic program, to which he never gave an iota of support, had failed. He demanded that the Government abandon all efforts at economic stabilization, declaring that inflation is inevitable in war. He proposed, in substance, that the workers "get theirs" by an anti-war strike policy. Such a line, if it were to prevail, could, of course, only destroy national unity and create internal turmoil. Lewis backed up his general defeatist policy by pulling his stooge representatives out of the War Labor Board, by refusing to recognize that board on the ground that it was prejudiced, by by-passing an appeal to President Roosevelt to adjust the situation, and by hastening into the strike full steam ahead.

As for the actual launching of the strike, Lewis, who rules the U.M.W.A. like a czar, proceeded with characteristic ruthlessness. He very reluctantly granted a 30-day stay in the bituminous districts and agreed to none whatever in the anthracite regions. No democratic, rank-and-file "folderol" for him. As the strike crisis date approached, Lewis' horde of field men circulated the "no contract, no work," and "no trespass" slogans among the miners, simply telling them that the

mines would all shut down if no agreement were reached. There were very few, if any, rank and file meetings called. It is not surprising, therefore, that the opposition to the strike, whatever there was of it, was stifled and submerged. The great body of the miners, full of economic grievances, animated by a powerful sentiment of union solidarity, believing the strike was pretty much only a demonstration, stayed out of the mines, although with many misgivings and hopes for a speedy settlement.

Lewis Attempts to Wreck President Roosevelt's Leadership

One of the major political objectives of Lewis in the strike, and part of his central plan of obstructing the national war effort, was and is to try and weaken the war leadership of President Roosevelt. The defeatist oppositionists in Congress and in the copperhead press are furthering their virulent hatred of the President, leaving no stone unturned in order to try and weaken his prestige and leadership. But none of these elements hates Roosevelt more violently or seeks his undoing more persistently than does John L. Lewis. This common hatred of Roosevelt by Lewis and the Congressional opposition shows their identity of general defeatist political purpose.

By provoking the coal strike, Lewis figured he had a heads-I-win-tails-you-lose proposition to defeat President Roosevelt now and for the 1944 elections. If the Government were forced to give the miners any concessions,

then Lewis, through his elaborate publicity machine, would vigorously claim full credit, and, on the other hand, if the President, as Commander-in-Chief, used troops to bring about the resumption of coal production, then, Lewis figured, Roosevelt would hopelessly discredit himself as a political figure among his mian political support, the millions of organized trade unionists. Whichever way the situation went, Lewis calculated he could not lose. As for the economic welfare of the miners and the national interest of our country in the war, these, of course, were non-essential details in Lewis' grandiose schemes of defeatist politics.

An especially sinister feature of the strike, and one which dovetailed directly into Lewis' attempt to destroy the President politically, was the intransigent attitude adopted by the coal operators in both the bituminous and anthracite fields. They were not a bit anxious to help the Government prevent the walkout. On the contrary, their whole line of policy led straight to the strike, even as did that of Lewis. The fact that they were willing to deal with the W.L.B. and did so, did not alter their general strategy, which was made to order for Lewis. They rejected the miners' demands point blank, all of them, including the yearly annual wage which was urged by Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins as a way out of the impasse. More than that, they even refused, as a condition for a 30-day postponement of the walkout of the soft-coal miners, to make the agreement, finally arrived at, retroactive

to April 1. They had to be compelled by the Government to accept this elementary consideration. This hard-boiled stand of the coal operators distinctly showed on their part an anti-Administration attitude.

Lewis' Attempt to Ensnare Labor in the Defeatist Opposition

The third political objective of Lewis in the coal strike, and also a central feature of his anti-war line, was, by means of the walkout, to lay the basis for bringing organized labor into a head-on collision with the Roosevelt Government and to make it the pawn of the defeatist bloc in Congress. In doing this, Lewis also hoped to grab off the leadership of our disunited labor movement. He knew full well that there was a broad spirit of economic discontent among the millions of workers and he timed his strike in an effort to crystallize this unrest around his leadership by a show of seeming militancy. Thereby he hoped, at the cost of our country in the war, to drive a wedge between labor and the Roosevelt Administration and to advance his own ambitions to be the number-one man in the American trade union movement.

The grave danger of this demagogic move by Lewis in seeking to appear as the bold champion of the economic grievances of the workers and attempting to lead hig sections of labor into the camp of the defeatists, is greatly enhanced by his strong backing from various reactionary groups. He is the darling labor leader of the defeatist Re-

publicans, even while they are utilizing his anti-war activities as an excuse for enacting legislation hostile to labor. The smelly Hearst press has also come out praising Mr. Lewis' "militancy in behalf of the workers." But, even more dangerous, in top A. F. of L. circles, Mr. Lewis has natural affiliates among such notorious and powerful reactionaries as Matthew Woll, W. L. Hutcherson and David Dubinsky. This group gave Lewis strong encouragement in the strike and is obviously working closer and closer with him. Even in the C.I.O. there is a sort of sneaking pro-Lewis sentiment, typified by Walter Reuther and James Carey. This C.I.O. pro-Lewis element does not endorse Lewis openly, but extends a greater or lesser support to his general defeatist line. The Trotskyites, Norman Thomas Socialists and similar ilk also find Lewis' activities to be grist to their mill and are giving him their backing.

The Responsibility of the Government

Lewis was undoubtedly repulsed in his bold attack upon the Government's war policy. Also it is doubtful if he succeeded in alienating any considerable trade union support from the Roosevelt Administration. Although he managed to get the miners out of the mines, he never could have held them out for any length of time. Reports from the coal fields showed that the miners looked upon the strike partly as a protest against their bad economic conditions and partly as a duty in carrying out trade union

discipline. They neither wanted nor would have tolerated any serious interruption of war production. Universally they hoped and looked for a quick settlement and an early return to the mines. Nowhere among them was there any mass desire for a long drawn-out struggle such as the miners have experienced in past strikes and as Lewis would have liked to see this time. As a result of President Roosevelt's radio speech and the seizure of the mines by the Government, about half of the men had already streamed back to work on Monday without waiting for Lewis' deadline of 24 hours later. Lewis just managed to save his face by his so-called 15-day "truce," which neither the President in his radio speech, nor Mr. Ickes in subsequent speeches, acknowledged. Had Lewis tried to hold the miners out of the mines for any length of time, the strike would have disintegrated. Actually, in a negative sort of way, the coal strike showed that the workers basically favor the no-strike policy. No one knows this better than Mr. Lewis.

Although the Government gave Lewis' strike policy a setback, nevertheless its victory is a contingent one. To make it real the Administration must follow it up with real measures to alleviate the bad economic situation that is now disturbing the workers. In his radio speech on that fateful Sunday night, President Roosevelt acknowledged that the miners have legitimate economic complaints, and he might well have included the workers in general. In the days following the strike, the

President further practically assured the miners and other workers of wage concessions through the War Labor Board by modification of the Little Steel formula. He also promised to roll back prices. On the latter question he said specifically to the miners:

"Wherever we find that prices of essentials have risen too high they will be brought down. Wherever we find that price ceilings are being violated the violators will be punished."

It is therefore distinctly up to the Government now to carry out these policies and promises, despite all defeatist opposition in Congress, if Lewisism and the economic discontent it feeds upon are to be liquidated. The miners must be guaranteed concessions along the line of wage adjustments, of the portal-to-portal demands,* or the guaranteed yearly wage. The six-day week, promulgated by Mr. Ickes immediately after assuming control of the mines, is not adequate, and in very many instances it was already in effect before the strike.

As for the workers in other industries, their economic conditions, too, must be eased, or else we may have a sudden spread of resentment that will be a fertile field for Lewisism. It is dangerous to assume, as Congressional reactionaries are doing, that drastic anti-strike legislation will take care of the situation. What is necessary is that the President's hold-the-line

* According to statements of the U.M.W.A. in the capitalist press, the miners often spend as much as four hours daily underground, going to and from their work places, for which they are not paid a cent.

order be fully carried out. This can be done if the President's seven-point program is enforced. Especially is it necessary that prices be "rolled back" to the levels of September, 1942, as the President has promised, that profits also be rolled back, that Roosevelt's new directives to the War Labor Board be applied resolutely, that a practical system of incentive wages agreeable to organized labor should be developed, and that job stabilization be carried out democratically, in concert with the unions and not in the face of their protests against bureaucratic abuses. The price chisellers in Congress must and can be defeated by appeals to the people and a liberal use of the veto power by the President. There must be no further concessions to the profiteers by Byrnes, Brown, Davis, Nelson and other war executives, who seem to be suffering from weakness of the knees. The workers, including the coal miners, are quite ready to endure every inconvenience or hardship in order to win the war, but they are not going to permit conscienceless profiteering at their expense. The Administration must check rising living costs, or be prepared to grant general wage increases, or to face serious working-class unrest.

The Tasks Confronting Organized Labor

After the brilliant Allied victories in North Africa it would appear that Great Britain and the United States are finally about to launch a second front somewhere in Europe. To make this great mili-

tary enterprise a success, and to bring victory in 1943, maximum production of war materials is an indispensability. And this uninterrupted, all-out production can be advanced in spite of the Lewises if, among other things, the Administration and the trade unions, resisting all defeatist pressure, will courageously strengthen and carry out the President's hold-the-line order.

The labor movement must realize that it has heavy responsibilities in applying the President's "hold-the-line" order. To break through the powerful defeatist opposition in Congress and elsewhere, the President's seven-point program must receive the hearty, vigorous support of the masses of the people. This means that the trade unions have to become far more active politically than they now are. The C.I.O. has shown the basic way that this activity should develop, through the formation of united labor action committees in all cities and Congressional Districts, through the unfolding of a national labor-consumer movement directed against the looming danger of inflation, and in militant support of the Government's "unconditional surrender" war policy.

This is a time when the labor movement must categorically reject all Lewisite policies which would make it a supporter, or half-supporter, of the defeatist bloc in Congress. It must support and strengthen the Roosevelt Administration. Especially it must renew and reinvigorate its no-strike pledge, both in word and in action, in the full understanding that this policy

is necessary, not alone to advance the nation's general interests in the war, but also to satisfy the specific grievances of the workers. Organized labor must clearly realize that Lewis' attempt to have labor repudiate its no-strike pledge is a blow aimed at our national war effort, an attempt to subjugate the trade unions to the line of his defeatist Republican friends: Hoover, Taft, Vandenberg, et al. Labor must understand, therefore, that the Lewis line of an anti-war strike policy cannot and does not protect the economic interests of the workers, but lays the trade unions wide open to violent attacks from the worst union-smashing reactionaries. And most important of all, it would jeopardize our national victory in the war.

Lewis' anti-war policy, in all its aspects, must be fought boldly and vigorously, and with it all the Wolls, Hutchesons, Dubinskys, Reuthers and Careys who are giving it open or covert support. Lewisism is now a grave danger confronting our labor movement, seeking, as it does, to misdirect labor's win-the-war policies, destroy its unity, and weaken generally its support of the war. The patriotic forces throughout the labor movement, the overwhelming mass of organized labor, must much more determinedly work together to destroy the influence of the copperheads now so busy inside and outside the ranks of the workers. As Earl Browder declared in St. Louis on May 8: "Every effort to break down the no-strike policy is a blow for Hitler and his Axis partners, is

treason to the people, is a betrayal of labor itself."

But Lewisism cannot be defeated merely by support in words of the no-strike pledge, however sincere. Ways must be found, by intensified political action, not only to back up and implement the Roosevelt Administration and its general war policies, but also to accomplish the no less necessary war task of protecting the economic standards of the workers. The workers have willingly agreed to lay aside the strike weapon for the duration of the war; therefore, in self-defense and as a condition of an effective national unity they must develop broad and active political action. Failure to do this would bring down disaster upon us.

While developing united labor action committees to fight against inflation and for a militant war policy, the trade unions must insist upon full representation in the President's Cabinet and in all war boards. This is necessary in order to give labor its rightful status as a full partner in the national war effort and to enable it properly to mobilize its vast following to help still more effectively to prosecute the war. A serious mistake made by organized labor in this war has been its failure to insist upon solid representation in the Government and to refuse to take "No" for an answer.

In this critical moment of our national history heavy political responsibilities rest upon the organ-

ized workers. The trade unions, 12,000,000 strong and with many millions of additional supporters and sympathizers, which are the very backbone of our national unity, of our people's war effort, must display more initiative and unity politically. The fight for the seven-point program is only the first and most urgent of these political tasks. Others closely related and no less vital press upon the workers. Roosevelt's "unconditional surrender" policy must be given day-to-day mass support. There is the great second front in Europe still to be established and then militantly supported; there is a rounded-out centralized war economy to be completed; there is national and international trade union unity to be established; there is a better working arrangement to be made between labor and farmer forces; there is the ruthless drive of the union-smashers to be defeated; there are the preparations to be made to smash reaction in the highly crucial 1944 elections; there are the vast problems of the post-war world to be faced after victory is won. All these fundamental tasks insist in a manner categorical and irresistible, that organized labor must unify its ranks and, in vigorous support of the war, develop its potentially vast and powerful political forces on a scale it has never heretofore reached. This is one of the most important lessons labor has to learn from the coal strike.