

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE HEADQUARTERS

Ottawa, 21st April, 1937.

SECRETNO. 852WEEKLY SUMMARYREPORT ON REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATIONS
AND AGITATION IN CANADAReport[~~9~~deletion: 1/4 page]

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APPENDIX NO. I: GENERALI. The Strike Situation(A) G.M.Co. Strike at Oshawa, Ont.

The strike of some 3,700 employees of General Motors Company at Oshawa, Ont., continues. The situation remains unchanged with approximately 100 workmen employed in the Parts and Service Department. Pickets are conducting themselves in a very orderly manner and, with the exception of some booing, the men employed in the Service Department are not being molested. Homer Martin, Hugh Thompson and J. L. Cohen arrived in Oshawa on the morning of 17th April and were given a great reception by a crowd of strikers numbering more than 1,000.

At a general meeting on the night of the 16th the strikers decided to accept the invitation of Premier Hepburn that J. L. Cohen, strikers' Attorney, and C. H. Millard, president of Oshawa Local 222 of the United Automobile Workers of America, attend a conference with General Motors representatives at Queens Park, Toronto, Ont. This conference, held on the afternoon of the 17th, suddenly collapsed when it was claimed by the Premier that the Committee for Industrial Organization officials were trying to dictate the course of action by “remote control”. This turn of events leaves the strike situation still deadlocked. On the evening of 19th April strikers, by an almost unanimous vote, rejected Mayor Alex C. Hall's proposals as a basis for settlement of the strike.

Leaders of the Communist Party of Canada attach great importance to this strike as it is the first mass strike conducted by the Committee for Industrial Organization in Canada; they feel that its success or failure will determine the future of the Committee for Industrial Organization in Canada. Prominent members of the Communist Party have been visiting Oshawa during the past two weeks in an endeavour to consolidate the work of the Oshawa Communists in relation to the strike. Sam Scarlett, M. Erlich (alias Jack Taylor), J. B. Salsberg, O. C. Doolan and others have gone to Oshawa, some to work directly with the Communist Party and others to attend

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to the circulation of the Daily Clarion, central organ of the Communist Party of Canada, which is devoting considerable attention to the strike. The work of the Communists in Oshawa has not been of a decisive character thus far, it is reported. Communist Party leaders are anxious to avoid any conflict with the authorities at the moment as they feel the ranks of the strikers are not correctly organized for such an occasion. The Communist Party appear to be at logger-heads with the strike leadership, particularly Thompson and Millard, who — while they desire the support of the Communist Party — are unwilling to have this fact known publicly; they do not seem anxious to give important strike positions to Communist Party members. The Communist Party claims that the strike leadership is a two-man leadership, highly undemocratic. They feel that if violence should break out there would be no chance of holding the ranks of the strikers together. Erlich has been entrusted with the task of having Communist Party members raise the question of a Strike Committee to try to broaden the strike leadership. To make up for their weak position in the strike itself, Communist Party members are exerting pressure through the Toronto and District Trades and Labour Council with a view to establishing a Provincial Strike Committee which would have two main tasks: (a) to collaborate with the Oshawa strike leadership on policy and (b) to carry out mass publicity work for the strike in the form of mass meetings and demonstrations. The Communist Party has been successful in establishing such a committee but so far has been prevented by its political opponents in the Toronto and District Trades and Labour Council from activizing the committee.

(B) Situation at St. Catharines, Ont.

Communist Party leaders claim to have reliable information that a strike is brewing in the General Motors plant at St. Catharines. About forty per cent of the men employed there are said to be enrolled in the union and the leadership there feels that the time to strike has come because of the Oshawa situation.

Communist Party leaders are to visit St. Catharines to consult with the local C.P.

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leadership in an endeavour to complete the unionization drive there before calling a strike.

(C) Dressmakers Strike at Montreal, Que.

Approximately 5,000 dressmakers came out on strike in Montreal, Que., on 15th April. They are demanding higher wages, shorter hours and better working conditions. After the strike was called picket lines were formed in front of many dressmaking plants. Hyman Langer, of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, arrived in Montreal from Toronto to assist in the strike.

Toronto dressmakers of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union have extended full financial and moral support to the striking dressmakers of Montreal. Toronto branches of the Montreal firms involved in the strike are to be picketed daily by the members of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, it was announced by Frank Foster, business agent of the union in Toronto.

(D) Longshoremen Strike at Toronto, Hamilton, Sarnia and Point Edward, Ont.

The Longshoremen's Union (Local No.1) of Toronto, Ont., came out on strike on 15th April in sympathy with approximately 225 longshoremen on strike in Hamilton. It is said that the strike in Toronto would affect approximately 300 men employed on the waterfront. Both unions are demanding a day rate of 50¢ an hour as well as a night, Sunday and holiday rate of 55¢ an hour. The present rate calls for 42¢ an hour for days and 45¢ an hour for nights, Sundays and holidays. The companies are said to have offered 45¢ and 47¢ per hour, respectively.

Longshoremen in both Sarnia and Point Edward are said to have struck in sympathy with the Toronto longshoremen.

(E) Strike of Edmonton Meat Packing Plant Employees

On 3rd April at 1.20 p.m. 200 employees of the Swift Canadian Packing Company plant, through one Victor Thompson, [ⓧdeletion:3 words]

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business agent of the Edmonton Meat Packing and Purveying Union, presented a series of demands to the management including one for recognition of the said union. They supported their demands by staging a "sit down" strike which lasted until 10.00 p.m. of the same day when the strikers were advised by the management that they could return to the plant on Monday, 5th April, to resume work or to continue negotiations with the management. The strikers resumed work on that day and remained at work until 2.30 p.m. when, owing to negotiations having collapsed, the "sit down" strike was resumed by the 200 workers. At 3.15 p.m. of 6th April the "sit down" strikers left the property at the request of the manager without causing any disturbance. Picket lines were organized in front of the plant supported by a number of women.

At 9.00 a.m. on 8th April 57 employees of Gainer's Limited at Edmonton, Alta., started at "sit down" strike. At 2.00 p.m. they complied with the request of the management to vacate the plant and they started orderly picketing. The demands of the strikers were recognition of the Edmonton Meat Packing and Purveying Union; reinstatement of employees allegedly dismissed for union activities; and a decision of the management not to handle cattle from the Swift Canadian Company plant at present. Mr. C. E. Gainer, the general manager, declared that he would deal with any group of plant employees but was not prepared to deal with outside interests — meaning Victor Thompson, well known agitator and official of the aforesaid union.

On 10th April at 7.00 a.m. approximately 75 employees of P. Burns and Co. Ltd. packing plant struck by leaving the premises and organizing a picket line outside the plant. Union recognition was demanded by the strikers. The number on strike represented approximately twenty-five per cent of the workers employed. Approximately 150 to 200 persons appeared in the picket line and continued to picket the plant each day. The chief department affected by this strike was the Meat Dressing Department.

On 12th April a mass meeting attended by approximately 1,000 people in the Market Square at Edmonton, held under the auspices of the Joint Strike Committee of National Unions, condemned conditions in the

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packing plants and laundries in Edmonton and scored the police action in protecting "scabs". The speakers included Joe Ferguson, Victor Thompson, Miss Winnie Clarke, J. Scode, E. Bolton, N. M. Smith, B. Pallott, Jack Nicholson, Andrew Hogarth, Jan Lakeman and Alderman Miss Margaret Crang.

On 14th April the strikes at Pat Burns' and Swift Canadian Company packing plants were called off and all pickets withdrawn on instructions from

the Strike Committee. The strikers were instructed to request re-employment at their old jobs and to report any discrimination on the part of the companies to the Strike Committee. It is said that none of the strikers was reinstated, the companies having informed the strikers that their vacancies had been filled. The pickets at the two plants were withdrawn at 8.00 a.m. on the 14th.

On 8th April employees of the New Method Laundry came out on strike forcing a complete cessation of work in that establishment, and on 9th April approximately twenty-five per cent of the employees of the Snowflake Laundry and Dry Cleaners struck. Picket lines were thrown around the two establishments with approximately 600 to 700 pickets, recruited largely from the ranks of the unemployed, participating. The strikes at the two establishments continue. No disturbances have occurred thus far.

2. Campaign in Aid of Spanish Loyalists

Some 48,000 tins of condensed milk and 100 cases of canned vegetables and fruit left St. John harbour recently on the ship "Hada County", it is announced by the Canadian Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. The committee announced also that 50,000 copies of a rotogravure illustrated tabloid have been printed and are being distributed to the various provincial centres to be sold at five cents a copy. The tabloid includes an article by Fred Griffin, correspondent of the Toronto Daily Star, now in Spain, and many pictures of Dr. Norman Bethune's Blood Transfusion Unit in Spain.

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APPENDIX NO. II: REPORTS BY PROVINCES

I. BRITISH COLUMBIA

3. Aim to Publish C.I.O. Paper in B.C.

After a careful survey covering the past two months, [~~deletion: 2-3 words~~] has reported to his district executive of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers that the proposal to publish a paper in the interests of the Committee for Industrial Organization in British Columbia has been favourably received in the six locals now established. He estimates that 1,000 of a circulation would be sufficient for the first three months and that it could be taken care of financially without return for that time. At the end of three months he figures that the circulation would be doubled and that it would then be on

a paying basis. [deletion: 1 word] had planned for an ex-newspaper man to take over the editorship [deletion: 1 line] on the grounds that the individual in question would be [deletion: 3-4 words] and possibly induced to undertake the same class of work further afield. As a second choice [deletion: 2 lines] is at present at Britannia Mines in Howe Sound and it is likely that he will be recalled to Vancouver shortly. The proposed paper will be in make-up similar to the B.C. Lumber Worker. The name of the paper has not been decided upon as yet but is understood to be under consideration. [deletion: 2 1/2 lines] and as such is subject to the discipline of the latter. Anything he may want to do in the union or in connection with matters relating to the activity of the union, [deletion: 1 1/4 lines]

II. SASKATCHEWAN

4. S.U. of U. Hold Well Attended Meeting in Regina

Approximately 1,000 persons attended a mass meeting and demonstration staged by the Regina branch of the Saskatchewan Union of

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Unemployed in the City Hall on the evening of 6th April in protest against the proposed dismissal of the Grievance Committee by the City Council. A resolution protesting the proposed action of the City Council was passed by the meeting; it was also decided that should the City Council ignore the resolution, delegation after delegation is to be sent to the council until the committee was reinstated. A delegation was selected to present the wishes of the meeting to the City Council.

On the evening of 8th April another protest meeting was held by the Saskatchewan Union of Unemployed in the City Hall at which Pete Mikkelson addressed the unemployed urging them to join the union.

The Grievance Committee referred to is composed of three members of the Saskatchewan Union of Unemployed and its function is to place before the City Hall any grievances that may arise.

III. ONTARIO

5. Toronto C.P. Section Organizers Receive Instruction on "Struggle for Peace"

The following instructions were recently issued by the Communist Party at Toronto to all of its local section organizers:

“During the period from now, up to the departure of the Canadian delegates to the Imperial Conference, and during the conference, we have the very important task of arousing the masses of Canadian people to the need of building up a powerful peace movement to prevent the plans of ultra-reactionaries being carried out, to prevent Canada being tied up to the Baldwin Imperialist war policies, to prevent the King Government yielding to the pressure of the Tory reactionaries and making further commitments for ‘Empire Defense’ (in reality for imperialist war and for aid to the fascist aggressors) at the London Imperial Conference.

“Our task is to develop the widest agitation against the schemes to tie Canada to Baldwin’s war policies and against the retreat of the King Government under pressure of the Tory reactionaries, from their pre-election promises. The best methods for this campaign in Ontario will be to direct our main fire against the reactionary leader of the Conservative Party in Ontario — Col. Drew, who is the Ontario representative of Canada’s ‘50 Big Shots’, and who leads the fight against the Hepburn Government in order to confuse the minds of the people, and becloud the main issue which is represented in their slogan — ‘Empire Defense’.

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“Our agitation should also take into account the most recent development in the steel industry, and particularly those plants which produce materials for war purposes. The price of steel and other metals is in the increase, and in every important war plant the wages of the workers have been increased (voluntary) to an unprecedented level, in order to stop the progress of the unionization drive. The bosses are feverishly preparing for a mass production of war materials, and they envisage huge, juicy profits, hence their sudden ‘Change of heart’ in regards to wages to their employees.

“Under pressure of Tory reaction the recent budget brought down by the King Government called for a tremendous increase in the appropriation for armaments, while at the same time, they propose a ‘progressive reduction’ of relief grants to the provinces based on the so-called new normalcy in business conditions.

“It is important, too, that our party take serious measures during this stage of the peace campaign to carry through our decisions regarding the 2nd National Youth Congress, to be held in Montreal in May. A central issue at this Youth Congress will be peace. Our work to popularise the Youth Congress Movement and to help elect and finance strong delegations from all cities must be linked up with our whole campaign around the issues dealt with in the C.C. Peace Statement”.

 IV. QUEBEC

 6. Communists Lead C.I.O. Union in Montreal

[deletion:1 1/4 lines] A report on the Steel Workers Union was given by [deletion:1 3/4 lines] stating that at present the union has a membership of 156 and 400 prospects who are willing to join. Organizationally, he said, the union is becoming firmly entrenched in the Peck Rolling Mills and that the men have already expressed a sentiment for strike. At present the union had advised against a strike but is drawing up demands to be submitted to the management of the mills. [deletion:1 word] further revealed that he will visit C.I.O. leaders in Toronto on 18th April in order to discuss the local problems with them. [deletion:2-3 words] gave a report on the textile industry saying that this section was moving very slowly. He complained that [deletion:1 line] had fallen down on the job. Fred Rose suggested that the Textile Union secure a union charter as soon as possible and when it is received, commence an organizational campaign

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at once. He was of the opinion that organizational work should first be carried out in the American textile plants such as the Canadian Celanese Mills at Drummondville and the Kayser plant in Sherbrooke. Fred Rose reported that the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union was originally slated to call the May Day Conference but because of the strike situation that has developed in the dress trade it was deemed inadvisable to call a conference of this type at the present time as the union feared that it would be immediately labelled as a Communist organization. After some discussion it was decided to suggest to the Labour Party that they call the conference. [deletion:1 1/2 lines] (This matter has since been brought up at the Labour Party meeting and they have agreed to call the May Day Conference and sponsor the May Day preparations.) [deletion:3-4 words] that it had been suggested to the Trades and Labour Council executive that they call a mass meeting in defence of the International Trade Union Movement. This is to be an indirect attack on the Catholic Syndicate unions. [deletion:1 word] declared that the council executive has agreed to call a meeting of this type in the near future, probably to be held in the Mount Royal Arena. [deletion:1 word] stated that the railroad unions are now receiving the Daily Clarion very favourably and suggested that the Clarion Bureau write to the railroad union leaders in an effort to secure their endorsement for the campaign which is in progress on behalf of the paper at the present time.