

GASTONIA
CITADEL OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE
IN THE NEW SOUTH

By
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Published for
NATIONAL TEXTILE WORKERS UNION

First Edition – September 1, 1929

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Photo shows the 16 workers arrested in raids on tent colony on the night of June 7, 1929, 13 of whom face the electric chair. They are; Amy Schechter, K. Y. Hendricks, F. E. Beal, C. Miller, Sophie Melvin, Wm. McGinnis, J. Harrison, R. Allen, Vera Bush, L. McLaughlin, G. Carter, K. O. Byers, Russell Knight, D. Hampton, J. P. Heffner and K. F. Gibson. The International Labor Defense is in charge of the defense.

Chapter I

The Textile Barons Demand the Lives of 16 Workers in Gastonia, N. C. Jail

By Bill Dunne

The lives of 13 workers in Gastonia, North Carolina, are demanded by the textile mill owners and their government. These workers are organizers of the National Textile Workers Union and were active leaders of the strike against the Loray mill of the Manville-Jenckes Co., which dominates the cotton textile industry in and around Gastonia. They are held without bail.

These workers are charged with murder, with assault with intent to kill and with conspiracy. The legal reason for these charges is that they, together with other workers, on the night of June 7, 1929, defended the headquarters of the National Textile Workers Union, the tent colony in which the Workers International Relief was housing and feeding evicted strikers, and their persons from a planned attack by police and thugs carrying out the orders of the Manville-Jenckes Co.

The *actual* reason for the attempt to railroad these workers to the electric chair and to long terms in the penitentiary is that they organized the N. T. W. U. and led a strike of workers in the Loray mill – the stronghold of the cotton textile industry in the South, a stronghold which the Manville-Jenckes Co. had been fortifying against unionism for years.

In the attack on the union headquarters the chief of police of Gastonia was killed, and three of his subordinates and one member of the union were wounded. The police had gone to the union headquarters to open the way for the “Committee of One Hundred” – the strongarm squad of the Loray mill, composed of superintendents, foremen, specially privileged employees, professional thugs and special police deputies. *The police were to be the “legal” shock troops and after they had gained entrance and started the attack the “Committee of One Hundred” was to come in and “mop up.”*

Following the defeat of the police the authorities of Gastonia utilized this same Loray mill gang to institute a reign of terror which lasted for three days and in which dozens of workers’ home were entered and searched and more than 100 arrests made.

Many of the arrested workers were brutally beaten, Major Bulwinkle, attorney for the Manville-Jenckes Co., was in direct charge of the raids and arrests. Arrested workers were brought before him and given the third degree.

The Gastonia Gazette howled for blood. An attempt was made to lynch Fred Beal. Every method was tried to arouse the populace to a murderous frenzy. The chamber of commerce crowd, the American Legion and the Lions and Kiwanis clubs – all appendages of the mill companies – yelled for the lives of the strike leaders and union members.

But the mill workers were not shaken in their attitude of sympathy with and support of the union and its leaders. The lynching appeal found no response in their ranks. The chamber of commerce and the official Loray mill crowd were unable to secure one iota of support from the mill workers in spite of the continued appeals to race, religious and political prejudice.

But the textile capitalists were determined to carry out the plot against the lives and liberty of these militant workers to its bloody conclusion. The Manville-Jenckes Co. hired the services of Clyde Hoey, brother-in-law of Governor Gardner, and considered one of the best lawyers in the state, to head the prosecution *staff of 16 attorneys* – all paid from the funds of the special union-smashing reserve of the mill owners. (It is stated that a fund of \$250,000 has been raised for the initial expenses of the conspiracy to railroad these workers to the electric chair and to prison.)

This huge battery of lawyers appearing as special prosecutors is probably without precedent in labor cases. Certainly no such staff of attorneys was ever gathered together in North Carolina before. They are the pick of the cotton mill attorneys of this state. Such preparation is in itself sufficient indication of the desire and intention of the lords of textiles to send 13 union organizers and members down the same fiery path which Sacco and Vanzetti trod.

Against these men and women of the working class who led their fellow-workers in struggle against the bosses of the Loray mill – the fortress of anti-unionism in the Gastonia region – is mustered the full force of the textile capitalists and the press which they control.

On the side of these workers stand the International Labor Defense and class-conscious workers everywhere. It is the task now – and a task needing the greatest energy and speed – to rally the

whole American labor movement and the whole working class in a solid battle line which will stand between these workers and their would-be executioners, a battle line which will oppose an unbreakable front and advancing ranks to the murderous offensive of the textile barons, their government and the capitalist class as a whole.

The lives of these workers are demanded by the bosses: Fred Heal, K. O. Byers, W. M. McGinnis, Louis McLaughlin, George Carter, Joe Harrison, J. C. Heffner, Robert Allen, Russell Knight, N. K. Gibson, K. Y. Hendricks, Delmar Hampton and Clarence Miller.

They are charged with murder and conspiracy.

These workers face long prison sentences: Ernest Martin, Walter Lloyd, Clarence Townsend, D. E. McDonald, Robert Litoff, C. M. Lell, J. R. Pittman, Vera Bush, Amy Schechter, Sophie Melvin.

They are charged with intent to kill and conspiracy.

The working class has enough dead heroes. It has not enough militant leaders and organizers. The workers in Gastonia jail, with the shadow of the electric chair hovering over them, must be restored speedily to the ranks of the labor movement from which they were seized. They must be freed!

The attempt to railroad these 15 workers to the electric chair, arising out of the determination of the textile mill owners to prevent the rise of militant unionism, is an integral part of the sharpening class struggle in the South. This sharpening struggle in turn grows out of the rapid industrialization of the South, the creation of new contingents of the proletariat from workers recruited directly from the countryside, and the tremendous economic social and political changes that are sweeping aside the old conception of the South as an agricultural section immune to the influences which divide the population of the United States into exploiter and exploited – robbers and robbed.

The class struggle in “the New South” is no less sharp than in North and the drive to execute 13 militant workers is simply part of the one general drive against the American masses, intensified by the ever-growing conflict for world markets and new fields for exploitation on the part of America’s imperialist rulers.

Competition for markets and sources of raw materials brings forward a new imperialist world war as a practical question of ruling class politics. The Gastonia case stands forth in bold relief as an example of the methods used by the capitalist class to destroy a working class leadership which cannot be bought or frightened. The

attempt to railroad Fred Deal, southern organizer of the National Textile Workers Union, and 12 other workingmen to the electric chair is part of the preparation of American imperialism for a new world war. Militant defense of these workers is an indispensable part of the struggle against imperialist war.

Chapter II

Gastonia's Place in the Industrialization of the South

The tremendous effect that the rapid industrialization of the South is exerting upon the economic, social and political life at the southern population is shown strikingly by the fact that four of the ten states composing the "solid South" deserted the democratic party – the historical party of the southern ruling class – in the last presidential election and gave their electoral votes to Hoover, the outstanding representative of republican party imperialism.

North Carolina, Virginia, Florida and Texas returned republican majorities for the first time since "the war between the States," 1861-65.

The classic low tariff and free trade policies of the democratic party suitable for the South when it was an almost purely agricultural section no longer fit the needs of a capitalist class which controls the production of one-sixth of the manufactured products of the United States and more than one-third of its mineral products. (The actual figures are (1927 estimates): United States total for manufactured products, \$62,721,375,000. The total for the South was \$10,371,793,000. For mineral products the totals are: United States, \$5,520,000,000; the South, \$1,836,575,000.)

The comparative figures for agricultural versus manufactured and mineral production are extremely interesting and significant: The gross value of all southern products, including agricultural, is \$17,393,014,000. (Agricultural figures are for 1928.) The value of all agricultural products was \$5,184,646,000, or almost exactly *one-third* of the total production. In other words, industrial production in the South today is almost exactly *twice* the value of agricultural production. In 1900 the United States as a whole produced manufactured products to the value of \$11,406,926,000. Today the manufactured production of the South alone slightly exceeds that figure.

The figures for the various fields of industrial production give a still better picture of the rapidity of the industrialization process. The most rapid strides have been made since the outbreak of the world war, and particularly from the time that the American masses were thrown into the European shambles to protect and insure the enormous loans made by the house of Morgan to the allied governments. During this period, greater inroads were made into the few liberties and privileges the American working class had won by years of struggle than all the rest of the time the United States has existed as a nation. But the wealth of the capitalist class of both the North and South was multiplied many times. Our figures for the increase of production in the South date back four years before the outbreak of the world war – to 1910 – but nevertheless afford a splendid basis for comparison:

The value of all manufactured products in the South in 1910 was \$3,158,000,000. At present (1927 figures) the value is \$10,371,000,000. Capital invested in manufactures increased in this period from \$2,886,000,000 to \$6, 853, 000,000.

The value of the raw products of mines, quarries and gas wells increased from \$213,540,000 in 1910 to \$1,058,000,000 in 1928.

The value of mineral products (refined, smelted, manufactured, etc.) increased from \$369,678,000 in 1910 to \$2,016,000,000 in 1927.

Coal mine production increased for this period from 121,000,000 to 243,000,000 tons.

Petroleum production increased from 80,000,000 barrels in 1910 to 573,000,000 barrels in 1928.

The production of phosphate increased in the same period from 2,650,000 tons to 3,399,000.

The production of sulphur increased from 250,000 tons to 2,000,000.

The value of manufactured furniture increased from \$25,000,000 to \$146,000,000.

The capital invested in cotton manufacturing increased from \$360,000,000 in 1910 to \$1,100,000,000 in 1928.

The value of the product has increased from \$235,000,000 to \$909,000,000.

The number of active spindles has increased from 11,149,000 in 1910 to 18,303,000 in 1928.

The number of active looms has increased from 236,845 to 346,660.

Cotton consumed in southern manufacture has increased from 2,529,000 bales to 5,475,000.

In these latter figures we see striking evidence of the effect of improved machinery and the speed-up (stretch-out) upon the output of the cotton manufacturing industry. Rationalization has been carried to almost the utmost extreme here *without* centralization of production in the industry.

An analysis of the above figures shows that while the number of active spindles has increased, in the period covered, by seven-elevenths, the amount of cotton consumed in the industry *has doubled* and the value of the product has *quadrupled!*

The ports of the South handle approximately one-sixth of the exports of the United States. The exact figures for 1928 are: United States, \$5,128,809,000; the South, \$1,631,690,000.

In the development of hydro-electric power and its application in industry, the South is more than holding its own. As is well known, the extensive use of hydro-electric power makes possible new and more effective rationalization measures. Especially is this true in those industries which utilize produce chemicals (rayon, phosphate, explosives, etc.).

The South now has at least 25 *per cent* of the developed hydro-electric capacity of the United States. In 1929, 61 per cent of the total gain made in developing hydro-electric power was in the South.

The South is becoming the homeland of the chemical and explosive industry – war industry. Its enormous resources of hydro-electric power and its “cheap and docile labor” (see the advertisements of the southern chambers of commerce in northern trade papers) recruited directly from the countryside are the chief bases for this development.

“There has recently been completed in Virginia, at a cost of \$35,000,000 for the first unit, a plant that can only

be expressed in terms as “gigantic” for the fixation of nitrate from the atmosphere, and the output is being shipped by full trainloads... Work has already been commenced on a second \$35,000,000 unit, and though the officials of the company are reticent as to the final magnitude of that undertaking it is generally understood that the completed plant will represent an investment of \$125,000,000 and will rival, if not surpass in size, the greatest nitrate plant of Germany, surpassing all others elsewhere.” (Blue Book of Southern Progress – Published by the Manufacturers Record, Baltimore.)

In the rayon industry, not only are huge plants being built, but great consolidations have been completed and are under way. In the latter part of June, 1927, the American-Enka corporation combined with the Glanzstoff-Bemberg interests to form a \$50,000,000 giant.

In 1928 the United States produced 97,000,000 pounds of rayon, of which southern plants produced 45,000,000. “Indications are that the total United States production in 1929 will exceed 125,000,000 pounds... the completion of new units now under construction at existing plants and of the several entirely new projects on which work began in 1928 will bring the South’s production to more than double the 1929 figure” (i.e., 90,000,000 *pounds* out of a total of 125,000,000. The world production of rayon in 1928 was 345,000,000 pounds).

Railroad mileage increased from 85,739 in 1910 to 92,117 in 1928. Expenditures for highways have increased from \$57,517,000 in 1910 to \$390,000,000 in 1928.

While in the United States as a whole the number of employed factory workers has been *decreasing* since 1919 as a result of rationalization, five states of the South show a substantial increase in the number of factory workers. South Carolina had an increase of 26 per cent in factory workers from 1919 to 1925 – the last year for which figures are available. North Carolina showed an increase of 15.6 per cent, Georgia of 14.4, Tennessee of 13.1, Alabama, 8.8 per cent. (The only northern state to show an increase during this period was Michigan – 9.4 per cent – undoubtedly reflecting the tremendous expansion in the automobile industry, which absorbed workers faster than they were displaced by the speeding-up process.)

The watchword of the new southern capitalist class is “Prosperity.” The assumption is that this includes “the people as a whole.” In the foreword to the “Bluebook of Southern Progress” – 1929 edition – one of the editors says: “The greatest natural asset of the nation – the South – is now being developed on a scale that will match, if not surpass, the most active development ever heretofore seen in the United States, and that means in the world. Every business man and woman in America is vitally interested in studying the situation.”

Concluding, the editor says:

“Surveying the whole southern situation, sweeping the horizon from one end to the other of the South, studying every phase of its development, There is being written in letters of burning” light – *Progress is everywhere* underway and *prosperity, even to agriculture, is coming on apace.*” (Emphasis in original.)

The wealth of the southern ruling-class increases at a tremendous pace. *The southern working class lives at the subsistence level.* The most casual examination of the following table shows conclusively that “southern prosperity” is built on the shoulders of the lowest paid workers in the United States.

Hourly Wage Rates Paid For Common Labor

(The rates on which this table is based are entrance rates paid for adult male common labor as of July 1, 1928, and reported by the U.S. Department of Labor.)

Industry	Geographic Division			
	United States (Cents)	South Atlantic (Cents)	East South Central (Cents)	West South Central (Cents)
Brick, Tile and Terra Cotta:				
Low	17.5	17.5	17.5	25.0
High	54.0	40.0	37.0	37.5
Average	39.4	27.1	25.0	27.8
Cement:				
Low	25.0	...	26.0	25.0
High	56.0	...	40.0	28.0

Average	37.2	...	28.7	27.2
Foundry and Machine Shop:				
Low	20.0	20.0	22.5	22.5
High	55.0	43.8	37.5	31.3
Average	38.4	27.8	31.0	28.4
Iron and Steel:				
Low	20.0	20.0	23.5	...
High	50.0	44.0	31.0	...
Average	42.5	36.4	27.8	...
Leather:				
Low	22.5	22.5	25.0	...
High	62.5	40.0	33.0	...
Average	42.3	33.3	31.0	...
Lumber (Sawmills):				
Low	16.0	16.0	17.5	20.0
High	62.5	35.0	25.0	25.0
Average	31.7	21.5	21.0	22.8
Paper and Pulp:				
Low	25.0	30.0	25.0	25.0
High	55.0	38.3	28.0	30.0
Average	44.8	36.4	25.9	26.8
Petroleum Refining:				
Low	30.0	30.0	...	30.0
High	62.0	50.0	...	51.0
Average	45.4	44.2	...	41.6
Slaughtering and Meat Packing:				
Low	37.5	40.0	...	37.5
High	50.0	20.0	...	42.5
Average	42.2	40.0	...	41.9

Public Utilities: *

Low	20.0	20.0	25.0	25.0
High	75.0	45.0	40.0	50.0
Average	42.9	31.7	29.7	30.2

General Contracting:†

Low	17.5	20.0	17.5	20.0
High	112.5	75.0	40.0	50.0
Average	47.4	28.4	27.3	34.7

Total:

Low	16.0	16.0	17.5	20.0
High	112.5	75.0	40.0	51.0
Average	44.9	29.4	26.0	33.8

For 158 cotton mills in the country the average per hour earnings of all workers were 32.4 cents. Comparable figures for the Eastern States include Connecticut, 39.1 cents; Maine, 32.7 cents; Massachusetts, 39.2 cents; New Hampshire, 41.9 cents; New York, 40.4 cents, and Rhode Island, 41 cents. The rates for the Southern group of States were: *Alabama, 24.4 cents; Georgia, 26 cents; North Carolina, 29.5 cents; South Carolina, 26 cents, and Virginia, 31.6 cents.*

The above table shows that there is a difference of 15.2 cents per hour between average wages in the South and North. This is of the greatest significance as indicating the extremely low standard of living of the great mass of the workers – unskilled and semiskilled – who form the overwhelming majority of the workers in southern industry (noticeably more so in the South because of the highly mechanized character of modern southern industry – textiles, rayon, chemicals, etc.)

* Includes street railways, gas works, water works and electric power and light plants.

† Includes building, highway, public works and railroad construction.

The textile industry in the South has grown like a mushroom. What is true of the South as a whole is true of North Carolina and what is true of North Carolina applies with added force to Gaston county.

North Carolina has 6,132,000 of the total of 18,303,000 active cotton spindles in the South – one-third. Gaston county has 1,243,000 active spindles, or one-sixth of the North Carolina total. It is the center of the cotton spinning industry – “The Combed Yarn Center of the South – With 112 Mills,” as the Gastonia chamber of commerce puts it.

Of a total of 347,000 active looms, North Carolina has 88,000, or one-fourth, although Gaston county has only 4,154. It is primarily a cotton spinning center and the great bulk of the labor is, consequently, of the so-called unskilled type.

Approximately 22,000 workers are employed in and around Gastonia when the mills are running to capacity. The average wage in the cotton spinning mills is \$12 per week. The working day varies from 10 to 12 hours.

Weavers average about \$22 per week when employed, but these skilled workers are a small minority of the total.

The cotton spinning industry in the Gastonia district is dominated by the Manville-Jenckes Co. Its Loray mill has 123,660 spindles and its High Shoals mill 32,560. The next largest mill company in the district operates only 58,000 spindles against the Manville-Jenckes total of 156,220. The “Loray mill crowd” controls Gastonia politics. The Gastonia city officials are as much part of the profit-making machine of the Manville-Jenckes Co. as are its spindles.



From the Manville-Jenckes Co, and the smaller companies which it dominates has come the slush fund with which to hire a special corps of spies for the prosecution of the members of the National Textile Workers Union and to pay the 16 attorneys enlisted in the holy cause of textile capital.

Chapter III

The Beginning of the Struggle in Gastonia

In February, 1929, Fred Beal was sent to Gastonia by the National Textile Workers Union to begin organization work. Well known for years to the textile workers of Lawrence and New Bedford, Massachusetts, as one of the most courageous and experienced leaders of their struggles, fresh from the battlefield of New Bedford, where 25,000 workers had rallied around him and the N. T. W. U. against attempted wage cuts in 1928 and where the strike was won in the face of mass arrests of pickets (800 being held for trial), Fred Beal came to Gastonia and went to work to build the N. T. W. U. in the Loray mill.

It was no easy task the N. T. W. U. had given Beal. The Loray mill was the center of anti-unionism. Its owners, with mills in Pawtucket, R. I., are leaders of the open-shop movement in that state. In 1920-21 an organization wave under the leadership of the United Textile Workers (A. F. of L.) had swept over the Gastonia mill district. It is estimated that at one time as many as 20,000 workers were on strike. The forces of "law and order" were invoked and a number of local leaders were jailed. The U. T. W. officials, after making many promises and collecting a considerable sum in initiation fees and dues, in the face of the pressure from the mill owners and their government, abandoned the field and left the mill workers to their fate.

For this reason principally, but likewise because of the extensive spy system of the mill owners, the workers were at first suspicious of any union agitation in spite of the intolerable conditions in the mills and the miserable wages.

The Manville-Jenckes Co. took the lead in establishing the "efficiency system" – the speed-up or, as it is known in the southern textile mills, the "stretch-out." A correspondent of the Baltimore Sun, who visited the Gastonia district and conducted an investiga-

tion, described the stretch-out process as follows:

“The method was to give a man who had been tending two machines four machines. The man whose work was increased would be given a few cents an hour extra and dollars would be saved by the discharge of other men. Piecework was also introduced and clock machines for measuring the output of each machine or operative were installed,

“The employees contended that they had no way of telling what they actually had done and had to take what the company chose to give them. They say that at the same time work was doubled the price for piecework was reduced. The company took full advantage of the North Carolina law, which permits 60 hours labor a week, and ran its day shift from 6 in the morning to 6 in the evening, with one hour off at noon, and its night force from 6 p. m. to 5:20 a. m., with the employees getting lunch by relieving one another, or not at all.”

In other words, what was taking place in the Loray mill and other mills in the Gastonia area was the *rationalization process* – more work by less workers – more machines, less men – wage cuts, unemployment. Capitalistic rationalization – placing the burden of ever-sharpening competition for world markets, with its growing threat of a new imperialistic war, upon the backs of the working class.

The speech delivered by Ethelbert Smith, United States Commissioner of Labor Statistics, to the Labor College of Philadelphia on April 27, 1929, gives a startling picture of the progress of rationalization in the textile industry both in the South and North. We quote:

“Machines have been developed and perfected to a point way beyond requirements. Perhaps in no other industry in the world has so much ability been applied to the development of machinery. Not only has the automatic character of the machines been carried to the limit but the productive capacity has been developed far beyond the needs. In 1919 we had warpers that could warp 350 yards per minute. In 1929 we have warpers that can warp 750 yards per minute. In 1913 we had looms that could produce 120 picks per minute. Now we have looms that can produce 220 picks per minute. These two pieces of complementary machinery

to the manufacture of cloth have been doubled in their capacity to produce, the loom being the principal item in fast production... And this super-machinery... results in the tendency to more and more mass production by the very reason of the expense of this machinery,

“Automatic features are likewise being added to this super-machinery, so that now instead of a weaver operating 30 or 36 looms, as was true only a few years ago, plants are now built in banks of 90, 180, 110, and I have been informed of one mill where a weaver is expected to look after 118 looms.”

Jos. S. Wray, secretary of the *Gastonia chamber of commerce*, wrote to the representative of a northern manufacturer:

“Wages in Gastonia range from 18 to 20 to 30 cents (per hour) for skilled workers... Children from 14 to 18 years of age can ONLY work 11 hours a day. Females under 16 are not allowed to work at night.” (From proceedings of U.S. Senate Committee of Manufacturers, May 8, 1929. – Emphasis mine).

Such conditions, coupled with the ability and industry of Fred Beal and other N. T. W. U. organizers who came into the field, rapidly overcame the distrust of the mill workers resulting from their disastrous experience with the U. T. W. leadership. A small local union of the National Textile Workers Union was formed. The discharge of a number of union members precipitated strike action on April 2; 2500 workers quit their jobs and joined the N. T. W. U.

On April 3, Governor Gardner, *who is himself president of the Cleveland Cloth Mills*, sent in five companies of militia. We will call upon the correspondent of the Baltimore Sun again to describe the immediate background of this demonstration of military force and the living proof of the fact that the government of North Carolina is a government of mill owners and other capitalists. The Sun’s special correspondent wrote:

“Estimates differ as to the number of workers who went out, but it was evidently large enough to cause considerable nervousness among the mill owners. The strikers were noisy and derisive around the mill premises and the manager asked

for protection of the property by the local police. This was furnished to the extent of ten or a dozen men.

“On Tuesday evening- the police attempted to stretch a rope across a street near the mill, and the strikers, grabbing one end of the rope, attempted to pull it away from the police, A tug of war, which disinterested observers say did not amount to more than a scuffle, ensued. But it was enough to cause the local authorities to ask the Governor for militia to defend the mill property.

“...When they arrived they began to clear the streets around the mill to the accompaniment of the nagging cries of the strikers. When one of the soldiers... started to push back a... woman who stood her ground, she told him to stop pushing; that she would go away but would not be driven. The soldier did not take the hint and the woman cracked him over the head with a stick. It required four soldier boys to carry her from the field and deposit her in the calaboose. The woman, Mrs. Bertha Tompkins, with four children under 5, whose receipt of \$4 for three nights’ work of eleven hours each had put certain unconventional ideas in her head, was released on \$100 bail.

“The tug of war and the striking of the soldier are the most violent things which have so far happened to require the pretence here of the five companies of the National Guard.... The strikers’ headquarters are within a couple of blocks of the mill and here congregate crowds of the striking operatives.

“There is not a so-called foreign face among them – not an Italian, Bulgarian or Russian Jew. All bear the kind of countenance that one sees among the valleys and hills of this region, whose people have been free from other admixtures since the early immigration to America.”

Apparently the correspondent of the Baltimore Sun is one of the few remaining journalists employed by capitalist papers who strive to tell the truth and who are not entirely devoid of sympathy for the struggles of underpaid and harassed workers.

But the federal “conciliator” sent down from President Hoover’s department of labor, managed by James J. Davis, its secretary, placed the seal of Hooverian approval, carrying with it the full en-

dorsement of Wall Street government, upon mill-owning Governor Gardner, his fellow mill owners and all their works.

Charles G. Wood, the “conciliator” in question, set an example for his associate strikebreakers of the federal department of labor – followed fairly well a little later by one Weinstock in the rayon strike in Elizabethton, Tenn. – by issuing the following statement:

“It is not a strike as strikes are defined; it is a form of revolution created by those committed to revolutions by mass action. No conciliation is possible until the misled workers divorce themselves from their communistic leaders. Until then the only way to meet the situation is just what is being done now in the way of protecting the rights of organized government by the police and military power of the community. In this connection I want to commend your Governor for his promptness and wisdom in meeting a condition which called for the immediate preservation of order.”

It is quite clear that not only did the strike of 2500 underpaid and overworked “mill hands” of the purest American stock meet the solid opposition of the city, county and state governments, but that the national government was also lined up against them and their union. The strike in the Loray mill, as practically every strike does in this pre-imperialist war period, had developed in three days from an elementary struggle for economic demands to a struggle between the striking workers and the *Government* – that “executive committee of the capitalist class.”

The Gastonia Gazette, the organ of the mill owners and the chamber of commerce crowd, took its cue from Governor Gardner and Woods, the federal strikebreaker, from Major Bulwinkle, chief counsel for Manville-Jenckes Co. and the Manville-Jenckes Co.’s Loray mill “Committee of 100,” composed of foremen and superintendents, scabs, spies, workers enjoying special privileges, and gunmen. “Citizens of Gaston County” published a page advertisement entitled “Mob Rule vs. Law and Order” in the Gazette April 4 – two days after the strike began and the day after the troops were sent in.

Under the above heading the advertisement said:

“Every patriotic, law-abiding American citizen who was at the Loray mills yesterday could see the difference between mob rule on one hand and law and order on the other. Every American citizen who loves his country and

venerates its traditions could easily see the difference between the *Stars and Stripes*, the beautiful emblem of this Republic, and the blood red banner of Bolshevism, the flag of those who favor the destruction of all constitutional government, the flag of revolution and bloodshed, the flag of the country which does not believe in religion, which does not believe in the sanctity of marriage. *Men and women of Gaston County, are you willing to permit the men of the type of Beal and his associates to continue to preach the doctrines of Bolshevism anywhere in America and especially in Gaston County?*

“Before the troops arrived yesterday the mob was rampant at and near the Loray mill in all of its seething hideousness, ready to kill, ready to destroy property. The troops arrived, men uniformed and armed, men true and loyal to their country, and all became quiet and the mob disappeared.

“Let every man and woman in Gaston County ask the question: Am I willing to allow the mob to control Gaston County? The mob whose leaders do not believe in God and who would destroy the Government?”

“The strike at the Loray is something more than merely a few men striking for better wages. It was not inaugurated for that purpose. It was started simply for the purpose of overthrowing this Government and destroying property and to kill, kill, kill.

“The time is at hand for every American to do his duty.

“This ad paid for by citizens of Gaston county.” (Emphasis in original.)

The Gazette supplemented the above appeal to passions and prejudices bulwarked by ignorance in *a state which has the lowest average for general literature reading in the United States* by editorials predicting and encouraging violence against the strikers and strike leaders and comment condoning in advance any terroristic measures taken by the chamber of commerce and official mill crowd and their deputized mercenaries.

In particular were The Gazette and its backers angered by the exposure of Governor Gardner as a mill owner made by Fred Beal and other strike leaders. One of the union speakers referred to the

governor as “a slave-driving mill owner” – a rather mild characterization, one would say, in view of the fact that the governor sent in five companies of national guardsmen on the second day of the strike. But *The Gazette* treated this as a treasonable utterance and predicted “unofficial” action in the absence of official act such as outright jailing of the strike leaders. On April 10 *The Gazette* said:

“It strikes us that some of this Bolshevik talk among the strike leader has gone about far enough. Just how far does the U. S. Government or the State of North Carolina permit seditious utterances... Hundreds and hundreds of peoples have been jailed for less offenses. This kind of talk *about the Governor of North Carolina* does not sit well with Tar Heels. *If officialdom does not soon take notice, somebody else will.*” (Emphasis mine.)

No more open incitement to wiping out the “insult” to the governor with the blood of some of the strikers can be conceived.

The *Charlotte Observer*, 21 miles from the scene of the struggle, seconded the motion of *The Gazette*, although using somewhat more cautious language:

“Governor Gardner has character and reputation that can withstand the assaults of these incendiary foreigners and by the time the people whose minds they are endeavoring to poison wake to a full realization as to where they are being led, they may manifest an inclination to resentful action, to the extent of making public repudiation of these vicious leaders.”

In such statements as the above can be discerned the fear that the textile workers will begin to think in *class* terms – to judge candidates for public office on the basis of their attitude toward the working class and its struggles. In a section of the country where the great mass of the workers have not even become acquainted with the truckling “punish enemies and reward friends” in the two capitalist parties policy of the American Federation of Labor leadership, any sign of *class* approach to the role of government officials is of revolutionary significance. Hence the frenzied defense of the Governor of North Carolina against an accusation which means nothing more or less than that he is of the same social group to which the Manville-Jenckes crowd belongs – a comparison which needs no

detailed explanation for mill workers to understand.

On April 10, one troop of cavalry (the troops in the Gastonia area included infantry, cavalry and a howitzer battery) was removed from the strike zone and replaced by deputized members of the American Legion. The Gastonia Gazette made this the text for another bloodthirsty editorial:

“Here is one thing for your note book.

“With the deputized home guard from among the members of the American Legion on duty in the strike area, the more riotous among the strikers might as well get set for some sore heads and bruised noses. The former service men are not going to put up with much foolishness and you can lay to that. The militia was forced to stand up and take quite a bit of razing from the boisterous element among the strikers, but let some of them try to get fresh with an old 1917-18 top sergeant or redleg who saw service in Belleau Wood or in the Argonne.”

Evidently to remove any doubt as to whom it meant, The Gazette, in its “impartial news column” of the same issue in which the above editorial appeared, said:

“As long as the strike leaders, Pershing and Beal and the two women, Dawson and Bush, are here to keep the spirit of the strikers flaming, the unsettled conditions will prevail; *if this source of the trouble could be removed*, the whole thing would blow over in a few days, it is the belief of the authorities.”

Perhaps a humorous occurrence will serve to set forth the servile role played by the American Legion as well as the starkly grim quotations given above. Gaston Post Number 23 of the American Legion has a weekly page in The Gazette. In a certain issue the following editorial was published:

“Do you know that there is less danger of the strike situation and in-industrial misunderstanding coming up in the mills where the Legion is active? Why? you may ask. Well, here’s the reason as we Legionnaires see it. In our Legion meetings, ‘Bill’ Winder, who works in a mill, sits next to his superintendent, ‘Red’ Morris, for example. ‘Bill’ gets

up and what he thinks, and so does 'Red.' Both are comrades in the service. Both have a common interest, and both find that the other fellow is a pretty good sort of guy. *Strikes are lest liable to occur in mills where men are members of the Legion.*" (Emphasis mine.)

The above editorial, kowtowing to the lords of textiles, was *published, with sublime appropriateness, on All Fools' Day, April 1.*

The strike in the Loray mill began on April 2.

During this whole period, while The Gastonia Gazette was trying its best to stir up popular prejudice, the mill workers, not only in Gastonia, but throughout to the Carolinas, were revolting in even larger numbers against the intolerable conditions in the mills. The Loray strike became the center of the movement.

Strikes occurred in Forest City, Pineville, Lexington, Greenville, Union, Anderson and Woodruff, S. C.

Popular sentiment was clearly with the striking mill workers and their leaders, so the stage was set for an attack by a picked band of thugs.

The mass of the population could not be aroused against the strikers and the organizers of the National Textile Workers Union but on the contrary was increasingly sympathetic. New methods of terror were planned by the chamber of commerce crowd and the Loray mill "Committee of 100," with the assistance of military commanders and the authorities.



An evicted striker's family, belongings and all. This is but one instance of a series of evictions of strikers

Chapter IV

A New Reign of Terror Starts

The textile workers, by April 15, had been shown the militant character of the National Textile Workers Union leadership in many different ways – ways which they understood and to which they responded with splendid fighting spirit.

The Workers International Relief was on the job. It collected and brought in food. It erected tents for evicted strikers. It established a relief store. Amy Schechter, the W. I. R. representative, won the undying hatred of the mill bosses and the respect of the mill workers.

International Labor Defense, with Carl Reeve as its representative and Tom J. Jimison as its attorney, was likewise in the field taking care of the numerous cases of arrests and other forms of “legal” persecution.

Under the leadership of Vera Bush, the women were solidly organized and took a leading place in all strike activities.

Clarence Miller and Sophie Melvin took care of the special interests of the young workers, who made up a big proportion of the strikers.

The strike, led by the National Textile Workers Union, with Fred Heal in charge, became a rallying center for the working class of the Gastonia area. For the first time in the history of the South, men, women and children of the working class realized that they were all units of the proletarian army and went into action together on the picket line and in the whole series of activities that developed around the strike and the union.

Although the percentage of Negro workers involved in the struggle was very small, special efforts were made, and successfully, to break down the racial prejudices of the white workers and establish a solid battle line of black and white workers.

The bosses used this issue to the limit. Their press and verbal propaganda reeked with the vilest form of incitation against the leaders. “Would you want your sister to marry a buck?” This classic question with which the southern ruling class and its agents seek to end all argument over such issues as lynching, Jim Crowism, the denial of the franchise, peonage, etc., was to be heard everywhere in the tense atmosphere of the strike area.

Nothing speaks with such telling effect for the militancy and consciousness of the leadership and the rank and file of the strikers as the fact that this heretofore open sesame to dissension and disruption in the ranks of the workers in the South failed completely this time to accomplish its purpose.

But the mill barons and their agents continue to use this issue. They are quite willing to start a race war if only the N. T. W. U. can be crushed. One of the affidavits submitted by the prosecution relates what the deponent evidently considers as the utmost in damaging testimony that Caroline Drew of the W, I. R., at a certain union meeting “introduced a Negro as her brother.”

The Gastonia authorities, their kindred in the state capital and their masters, the mill owners, were witnessing the beginning of a great worker revolt against the new slavery in the “new South,” embracing all sections of the working class. They saw and they were afraid.

On April 18, about 2 a. m., after the police and the special deputies had obligingly arrested the strikers in the union headquarters, and under the noses of the military guardians of “law and order,” a masked band of from 50 to 75 wrecked the union headquarters – practically demolishing it. The gang then raided the Workers International Relief store and threw all food and supplies into the street, after defiling them. Amy Schechter was arrested. Ellen Dawson was arrested. Police were sent to look for Fred Beal, for whose arrest a warrant had been issued on a framed-up charge that was later dropped.

A state detective sent down from the governor’s office was “unable” to find any clues leading to the detection of the raiders. The grand jury of Gaston county sat in solemn session on the case and likewise was “unable” to find enough evidence to indict anyone.

The soldiers were withdrawn and their places taken by special deputies. Systematic persecution of the strikers and their sympathizers was inaugurated. Picketing was prohibited. The strikers then organized parades. The city council passed an ordinance prohibiting parades. The strikers paraded anyway and many arrests took place.

The special police officers waylaid strikers and sympathizers, beat them and abused them in other ways. The company instituted a fresh campaign of evictions.

On May 7, the Washington, D. C. Post carried the following dispatch under a Gastonia date line:

“Striking members of the National Textile Workers Union were facing a new and pressing problem tonight as police deputies began carrying out eviction orders issued today against 62 families formerly employed by the Manville-Jenckes Co.

“The deputies began their dreary task at 2 o’clock this afternoon. As the chill of nightfall crept over the town they had entered 13 of the mill shacks, dragging the humble furnishings and cherished possessions out into the street.

“The mill people, although reduced to a condition approaching absolute poverty by the 5-weeks strike, offered no resistance to the officers. In most cases they stood passively by while their homes were emptied.

“Some, however, spoke bitter words, while a few of the women wept as they watched their belongings dumped into the gutter in front of the place where had been home.

“For two families the eviction was a grave matter. Illness failed to stay the hands of the officers.

“The families of Henry Tetherow and J. A. Valentine were evicted... Valentine’s 4-year-old daughter was said to be seriously ill with smallpox against which this state has no quarantine laws.”

On May 7 “the mill people... offered no resistance to the officers.... Some, however, spoke bitter words, while a few of the women wept.”

On June 7, *exactly one month later, the struggle in Gastonia had reached a far higher stage – that of armed struggle.*

The strikers replied to the attack of the police and thugs on the headquarters of the National Textile Workers Union, not with bitter words and the tears of their women, but with bullets. They stood with arms in their hands, these men who had been beaten and driven with bayonets and blackjacks for nine long weeks, who had seen their wives and sisters and women organizers choked and slugged, and exchanged shot for shot with the police who had invaded the union premises and the tent colony without warrants.

The chief of police was killed. Three officers and one of organizer were wounded. The armed attack was repulsed.

In their first engagement the Southern textile workers gave a good account of themselves.

Later came the second raid by the Loray mill “Committee of 100,” led by Major Bulwinkle, chief counsel for the Manville-Jenckes Co. All night long and for two more nights and three days strikers and union members were hunted like wild beasts. Homes were raided, men and women routed out of their beds, beaten and dragged to jail and there beaten again.

Fred Beal, who had taken Joseph Harrison, wounded organizer, to the hospital after the shooting was arrested the next day in the telegraph office in Spartanburg. An attempt was made to lynch him as the police brought him back through Gastonia. The attempt failed solely because of the mass sympathy for the strikers it could not be made to look like an act of popular vengeance.

More than one hundred workers were arrested and jailed.

Charges of murder, assault with intent to kill and conspiracy were preferred against 70 workers. The number was later reduced to 23 – 15 held without bail on all three charges and 8 released on \$750 bail on the two last charges.

It was not the fault of the Gastonia Gazette that some or all of arrested workers were not done to death in the streets or the jail.

The day after the battle, June 8, at the union headquarters, while the “Committee of 100” was hunting members of the N. T. W. U., the Gazette said, under the heading, *A Deep Laid Scheme*:

“That the whole thing was a deep-laid plot is supported by ample evidence. The original plan included the shooting of the editor of The Gazette, who had been denounced and cursed at every meeting held by this bunch since the strike began April 1. Between 1 and 2 o’clock Friday afternoon Beal called on the editor of this paper – it was the first time he had ever set foot in The Gazette office – and invited the editor to witness the showing of a Passaic strike moving picture at union headquarters that night – the murder night. He was insistent and, but for previous plans the invitation might have been accepted. Had he done so we have no doubt he would have met the same fate that the police officers met. He was a marked man and gives Divine Providence credit for being saved from the fate of the officers.

“The Gazette has always counseled against mob violence. It has tried to reason with people it believed misguided. It has not preached violence. It does not now. But we do insist that this is a clarion call to Gastonia, Gaston County and the State of North Carolina to clean out this Communist crowd whose stock in trade is violence in its worst form. The hour has struck. Uproot this evil or the Old North State will some day go down beneath a wave of murder and blood and death.”

On its editorial page of the same issue it published the following letter:

“NOW YOU SEE WHAT HAPPENED

“To the Editor of The Gazette;

“Now I guess you see what has taken place in Gastonia, here in our fair Southland where we boast of our one hundred per cent Americans. The land where you can buy a Bible for fifteen cents and a drink of prohibition whiskey for two dollars, where the officers of the law go out on the discharge of their duty and are shot down by a gang of cut-throats, thieves robbers incited to riot by a mob of Communist jailbirds.

“I have been telling you through The Gazette what you might look for. You are just like a man playing with a rattlesnake till it bites his child before he kills it. You have played with the dirty gang of dogs till four officers of the law are shot.

“The workers of Gastonia, in stupid ignorance and total inability, have lined themselves up with a gang of hissing hyenas that are not fit to associate with a mangy she wolf and are trying to put a barrier on capital by engaging in a strike and don’t know what they are striking for.

“And now from the dizzy heights of Washington to the pine-plank whittler at the cross-roads store there will be hurled at you the mouth-made thunderbolts of rebuke.

“Now if this does not raise the indignation of the people so they will put this Communist trash away from here, you are not fit to be called Americans any more. If you want to put them away from here and need a leader call at house 108 Dix street and you will find one.

“J. A. MULVEE.
108 Dix Street, Gastonia, N. C.”

In the same issue it published another editorial, entitled “Their Blood Cries Out,” which said:

“The blood of these men cries out to the high heaven for vengeance. This community has been too lenient with these despicable curs and snakes from the dives of Passaic, Hoboken and New York. For weeks and weeks we have put up with insult and injury; we have tolerated their insults and abuses. Our officers have taken unspeakable abuse from these folks day after day. We have put up with it, hoping that they would wear selves out, although fingers were twitching to get at them.

“No one but those who have experienced the abuse heaped on officers and citizens can know what this community has suffered from the presence of these vipers in our midst.

“And now they have made good their threats of violence. They shot down as brave and as good a man as ever lived. Chief Aderholt had no ill feelings toward these folks. He pitied rather than censured them. After he had to use desperate methods to keep his men from resorting to violence in the face of unspeakable epithets and vile abuse from this gutter scum who have come South to prey on the ignorance of a deluded people, it was the very irony of the fate that Chief Aderholt should be the victim of unjustifiable violence at the hands of these very people.

“The blood of these officers shot down in the dark from behind cries aloud. This display of gang law must not go unavenged.”

On June 10, three days after the battle, The Gazette was still howling for blood. It was still inciting the chamber of commerce forces of “law and order” to do murder. Its entire front page for this date was given over to the drive against the lives of the workers who had defended themselves and their union headquarters against a planned armed attack by the mill owners’ police. Beginning with the announcement of the funeral of Chief of Police Aderholt, The

Gazette worked up to such open appeals to and advice for lynching parties as the following:

“This community has been singled out by the Communists and reds for a display of lawlessness and reign of terror. Such tactics must be met by a stern and uncompromising resistance. We have temporized with this gang of hoodlums long enough. *It is high time they were run out of town.*”

“Our community is stirred as never before. The patience of our folks is about exhausted.”

The front page of this issue carried the seven-column headline: “*Communists Pick Gastonia as Bloody Battleground?*” A two-column head under this said:

“Importation of Gunmen and Numerous Threats Lend Color to Belief – City on Seething Edge of Boiling Volcano; Fight Is Not Over – Citizens Aroused –Gazette to Raise Fund for Chief Aderholt’s Family – Hour Has Struck.”

The new story under this head, printed in bold face, at a time when houses of workers were being entered and searched and the “Committee of 100” was dragging workers to the jail by the dozen to be beaten and then hauled before Major Bulwinkle and again given the third degree, stated as follows:

“Gastonia rests today on the edge of a possible volcano.

“Her people have kept their heads. There has been no lawlessness on the part of Gastonians; only on the part of Communist strikers, their sympathizers and a bunch of hired thugs.

“But the town is on a nervous edge. Many threats have been made. There are still radical Communists loose in the community and there is ample evidence to support the belief that others are on their way here.

“That the Communist International has picked on Gastonia as its battleground in the United States is strongly believed by many close observers who have for nearly three months studied the situation and have kept in direct touch with it.

“Saturday morning the home of Mrs. R. L. Welch on East Third Ave was burned. Mrs. Welch furnished sandwiches to the Loray mill workers. She had been repeatedly threatened, as had young Eidson, who delivered for her. There is strong evidence to indicate that this fire was the incendiary work of the Communists.

“Saturday night the home of George Sanderling, a house belonging to Loray mill, was burned. There is reason to believe it was set afire by Communist thugs. Sanderling came here from Greensboro recently to work in the Loray mill.

“Many believe the fight has just begun and that Gastonia must either have martial law and protection by the State or her loyal citizens must be armed by the hundreds and deputized in order to protect our homes, lives and our property from death and destruction at the hands of the murderous agents of the Communist International.

“American citizens are not going to sit down supinely and see their homes and property and lives destroyed.

“It looks like the hour has struck when something drastic must be done.

“Plainclothes men should meet every train, bus and jitney entering the city and see that every person entering can show satisfactory reason for being here. This is a necessity because there is reason to believe that the Communists are sending their agents and gunmen here.

“A fund should be raised for the family of the dead chief, O. F. Aderholt, who protected the lives of this community for twenty years on a small salary. The Gazette will undertake to raise this fund and is glad to announce that J. Lee Robinson, president of the First National Bank, starts the fund with a contribution of \$100. Contributions should be sent in immediately to this paper and will be acknowledged from day to day.

“There is no secret about the fact that Beal brought back with him from Elizabethtown, Tenn., last Thursday 12 or 15 of the worst characters he could assemble in that town. These men are scattered in all parts of Gastonia. They are dangerous characters. Any person having any

knowledge regarding their location should notify the police department at once.

“There is an end to all patience. Gastonia has suffered in silence and has been repeatedly slandered by some of the state papers that have a Communistic leaning. But our people know their own situation and we do not believe they are going to sit idly and see Gastonia made a blood-red battlefield just because the Moscow crowd has said it must be.”

Also on the front page of the same issue *The Gazette* carried a two-column boldface box headed “Highlights of the Situation” which said:

“A woman giving her name as Charlotte Wilder and claiming to be from Smith College, Massachusetts, arrested Sunday afternoon on suspicion and detained for an hour by the police, was released. She claimed to represent the Nation and to be gathering data for a book.

“A man who said he was from New Jersey and who stopped at a local hospital in an effort to get a shot of dope, was told he had better move out of town, and did so.

“All incoming buses, jitneys and trains are being closely watched for suspicious persons.”

The “respectable element” was in the saddle. The leaders of the mill workers were in jail with *The Gazette* demanding their lives.

To attempt to account for the ferocious drive against the organizers and members of the National Textile Workers Union on the part of *The Gazette*, the Loray mill crowd and the chamber of commerce merely from the standpoint of their hatred of “foreign agitators,” (anyone born outside the state is considered a foreigner in North Carolina) “reds,” etc., is to make a big mistake.

The fury of a ruling class whose slaves had revolted was evident in every act and utterance of Gastonia’s rulers. But there was something more than this:

The Gazette, the chamber of commerce and the “committee of 100” headed by Major Bulwinkle, counsel for Manville-Jenckes, had something to conceal!

The high notes of their bloodthirsty yelps – their unrestrained denunciation of Fred Beal, Vera Bush and other strike leaders – their slander of textile workers who shot in self-defense as “hired

gunmen” – were designed to conceal the glaring fact that they themselves had conspired with the Gastonia police force to raid the union headquarters and the W.I.R. tent colony, drive the strike leaders out of town, or kill them, and disperse the evicted strikers.

The Manville-Jenckes officials and their hangers-on knew that the workers in the Loray who had gone back to work were ready to strike again on the evening of the raid on the N.T.W. headquarters.

A mass meeting had been held that afternoon at the union headquarters. The strike committee was in close touch with the workers in the mills. It had been agreed that a picket line would be formed after the meeting and as it marched past the Loray mill the night shift was to strike.

Loray mill workers have told since the battle over headquarters, and have given attorneys for the International Labor Defense affidavits to the same effect, that the superintendents and foremen had distributed arms and ammunition to the members of the “Committee of 100” inside the mill.

At the mass meeting eggs and rocks were thrown at the speakers by Loray mill agents. One of them tried to shoot at Fred Beal, but his gun was knocked down and the bullet went into the ground.

The picket line was formed and began its march toward the mill. About 200 workers were in line – men, women and children. At the railway tracks on Airline avenue the picket line was met by the police. They beat and choked Vera Bush; Sophie Melvin they dragged by the hair. Mrs. McGinnis, an old woman, mother one of the defendants, was knocked down and beaten. One of the officers told her he would “blow her brains out.”

The picket line was turned back. Earl Tomkinson, one of the strikers, was followed by police officers and knocked down, with his back across the railway tracks. The officers then jumped up and down on his stomach. Any number of witnesses heard one of the officer say:

“Let’s go on up to the headquarters and clean them out.
We have to do it anyway.”

The police arrived a little later. They leaped from their machine, grabbed one of the union organizers – Harrison – knocked him down and began shooting. The strikers, who had been guarding their new headquarters since the destruction of the old one and the

beginning of the continuous terroristic tactics of the police and special deputies, replied with shotguns.

All witnesses agree that the police had been asked if they had a search warrant when they first invaded the union property. They replied; "We don't need no goddam warrant. We got all the warrant we need." *It was not until a bullet from a police revolver had passed through the cap of William McGinnis – one of the strikers – that shots were fired by the N, T. W. U. members.*

The police were merely the "legal" shock troops. The plan was for them to gain entrance to the headquarters, arrest and hold the union members at the point of the gun while the "Committee of 100" came in and repeated the raid of April 18. This time, however, it was planned to beat, shoot and kill the strike leaders if this was found necessary to smash all resistance on the part of the union members.

Women and children were sleeping in the tents back of the union headquarters. The resistance put up by the strikers undoubtedly prevented the carrying out of a mill owners' conspiracy which could only have ended in the death of more than one worker. The casualties in this conflict were mostly in the ranks of the agents of the mill owners, and at this every worker who has ever been on strike in the United States will rejoice.

What was planned as a second Ludlow was turned into a defeat for the mill owners' armed forces.

The following affidavit shows clearly the aggressive tactics of the police under direction of Aderholt and the close connection between the attempt to break up the mass meeting, the attack on the picket line and the armed raid on the union headquarters:

"Jules Hefner, about twenty (20) years of age, works at the Arlington Mill and is a brother of J. C. Hefner.

"On June 7, 1929, about 8:30, witness went to the union headquarters on North Loray Street, in the city of Gastonia, to try to find his brother, J. C. Hefner, While he was there a group of people, mostly women, started toward the Loray Mill with the intention, so they said, of forming a picket line to picket the Loray Cotton Mill. The witness followed them and when the group had gone about two blocks, they were met by certain police officers of the city of Gastonia who set upon them to turn them back. They

grabbed one woman and two of the officers threw her to the ground. There was considerable arguing between the officers and the group of people, both using harsh language to each other. When the group of people were turned back, the witness heard one of the police officers, whose name he does not know, say to the other police officers: 'We are going to have to go down and shoot the sons of bitches, and we just as well do it now.' Whereupon the officers went in the direction of the union headquarters and shortly thereafter the witness heard firing and looking in that direction from where he stood about a block away, he saw the blaze from guns, some of them being pointed toward the union headquarters and some of them appearing to come from the grounds of the union headquarters. The witness did not see any shots fired from the union building itself."

"Glen Jones, who works at the Arlington Mill, was standing with this with this witness when the officers made the remarks about shooting and was with him when the firing began, but immediately ran away."

As indicating the character of individuals composing the forces of "law and order" in Gastonia and the high type of manhood selected by the mill barons to uphold the ideals of "100 per cent Americanism," we submit herewith an affidavit dealing with the activities of Officer Gilbert, and the thug Roach who was not even an officer when he took part in the attack on the N.T.W.U. headquarters, on the afternoon of the day on which the attack was staged:

The following affidavit is detailed. Consider the consequences to the strikers and their families had the attack on the union headquarters by these two murderous bullies and others not been repelled:

North Carolina,
Mecklenburg County.

AFFIDAVIT

"R. C. Brown, being duly sworn, says:

"That about six o'clock on June 7, 1929, he was at the place of business where he is employed near the Catawba River in Mecklenburg County when Officers Tom Gilbert and A. J. Roach, of Gastonia drove up from the direction of

Charlotte, and asked Pedro Melton to sell them liquor; Melton to them that he did not know where there was any liquor, and they asked him where Mr. Hensley was; Melton said he did not know where Mr. Hensley was, and Officer Gilbert said ‘you are a liar, you God-damned, bootlegging son of a bitch.’ Melton started into his place of business whereupon Officer Roach drew a pistol which he had concealed about his person and pointing it at Melton said ‘don’t go in, you son of a bitch, or I will kill you,’ and Officer Gilbert got out a black-jack, which he had concealed about person and both Gilbert and Roach started toward Melton in a menacing and threatening manner, whereupon Melton ran into the Catawba river and was swimming out into the water. Officer Gilbert took the pistol from the hand of Roach and shot twice at Melton while he was in the water, after Roach fired it twice at J. C. Hensley as Hensley ran into the woods. The both of the said Gilbert and Roach threw rocks at Melton while he was the water, cursing him and calling him vile names, threatening to kill him until Officers John Ervine and Henry Mosley, of Mecklenburg Rural Police came and disarmed the Gaston officers, Gilbert and Roach, and ordered them to go back into Gaston County, after Ervine and Mosley had asked Melt and Hensley if they desired the Gaston officers prosecuted and had been advised that they did not desire to prosecute them. Both of the Gaston officers, Gilbert and Roach were in an intoxicated condition.

“Subscribed and sworn to before me this day of June, 1929.”

For weeks previous to the armed attack on the union headquarters and their families had been subjected to the constant insults and assaults of such types of thugs as the above affidavit depicts.

Their headquarters and relief store had been wrecked once. The murderous incitement by the *Gastonia Gazette* was before their eyes daily.

These workers would have been remiss in their duty to the labor movement and to their class if they had not organized to defend themselves, their families, their union and their headquarters from the mill owners’ mercenaries.

All honor to these workers. They have written a splendid page in American labor history. They shall not die at the hands of the mill owners' executioners.

They must and they will be returned to the ranks of the working-class to add their abilities and their unconquerable heroism to its growing strength.

The International Labor Defense is their shield as it is the shield of the working class everywhere. The support of the I.L.D. and the defense of these prisoners of the class war is part of the class struggle in the United States – part of the struggle against union smashing and capitalist rationalization, the sinister prelude to the imperialist war program of Wall Street imperialism headed by Hoover.

**NATIONAL TEXTILE WORKERS UNION OF AMERICA
GASTONIA LOCALS**

May 16, 1929

Max Gardner

**Governor of the State of North Carolina
Raleigh, North Carolina.**

Sir:

The textile strikers of Gastonia are building with their own hands new union headquarters to take the place of the one demolished by thugs, while the state militiamen were looking on. The new building is about to be finished and the dedication will take place next Saturday evening, May 18th before thousands of workers.

It is rumored around Gastonia that enemies of the workers, inspired by the mill owners, are plotting to wreck our new headquarters within three days after completion.

The strike committee took the matter up today and decided that it is useless to expect the one-sided Maneville-Jenckes law to protect the life and property of the many striking textile workers of Gastonia. Every striker is determined to defend the new union headquarters at all costs.

Very truly yours

[Signed] Roy Stroud
Chairman of the strike committee

The above letter was sent to Governor Max Gardner by the strike committee after destruction of the first ...

Chapter V

Immediate Effects of the Gastonia Struggle

The battle at the N.T.W.U. headquarters which closed the second phase of the struggle for the organization of the mill workers of the Gastonia area into a militant industrial union – the first phase being the preliminary work and the strike itself up to destruction of the union and W.I.R. headquarters on April 18 – had the effect of a high explosive shell fired into an ice jam which has backed up the waters of a mighty river.

For the first time in the history of North Carolina a fundamental political issue with its underlying economic causes shows itself as an integral part of the ebb and flow of the class struggle in the United States. More than that, throughout the whole South the Gastonia struggle is the center around which social forces – class forces – are crystallizing.

Just as the Haymarket case in Chicago in 1886 symbolized the struggle for the eight-hour day and the emergence of the proletariat in its classic form from the American social structure, so does the Gastonia case symbolize the emergence of the Southern working class as an integral part of the American proletariat.

But the struggle centering around the defense of these 13 workers in the shadow of the electric chair is more than a symbol – it is a dynamic factor molding and shaping the development of the class struggle, not only in the South, but in all America. Around the defense of these workers surge the tides of mighty social forces. The ranks of the Southern proletariat are forming fast and this brings the masses into conflict on issues old as the proletariat itself, but hidden until now in the confusion that has accompanied the development of a modern capitalist system on the base of the old semi-feudal traditions and an agricultural economy.

The right of workers to organize, to strike, to picket, to defend their union, to defend their families and themselves from the armed attacks of the agents of their class enemies – these burning class

issues have thrust themselves through the crust of Bourbon prejudices like a giant's fist. These issues will not down. They have come with the Southern proletariat and they will stay until the social revolution resolves them in its fiery crucible.

The Gastonia *Gazette* expresses the policy of the diehards – the remnants of the old landed aristocracy and the new tobacco, textile and water power capitalists together with their train of middle retainers – the professional and mercantile elements who have been created by the new capitalism and are dependent upon it.

The working class is beginning to emerge as an independent political factor. For the first time the workers speak of working class needs in connections with politics. The old alignment of democrat and republican has been broken forever. Unions, strikes, wages, hours, conditions of labor, have become political issues. They are no longer divorced from politics in the minds of workers. Among large masses of workers the role of city, country, state and national government will never again be separated from the problems of their daily struggle for a livelihood.

In between the two opposing classes stands a section of the middle class which has derived no benefit from the industrialization of the South and which is consequently in conflict with the textile lords, the power interests, the big tobacco companies and the huge chemical concerns – which together form the basis of Southern industrialization and the new Southern capitalist class. With them are the intellectuals whose base is the University of North Carolina.

On the question of the right of the workers to organize, the difference that appears in the Southern press is mainly on *tactics*. The diehards of the old regime and the big capitalists *want no unions of any kind*. The smaller capitalists and a section of the middle class intellectuals are in favor of unions *providing they are properly controlled*.

Militant unionism finds its champions only among the exploit workers – black and white.

That the watchdogs of American capitalism – the American Federation of Labor leadership – stand ready to aid the Southern capitalists to quell the growing revolts of the Southern workers is proven by the statements of President William Green made to the United States senate committee on manufactures on May 8. Green was speaking of the struggle in Gastonia:

“Is that a way to promote industrial peace and cooperation? Is that the sort of tactics that are to be employed in the maintenance of these textile industries of the South? Women and children’s belongings thrown out into the street promiscuously and indiscriminately. Those people had served the mill company faithfully and well until they rebelled against the impositions that were placed upon them, and then out into the street with their belongings merely because an industrial dispute occurred!

“We talk about communism and about communism having penetrated into those communities. What is that breeds communism? It is just such a condition as this to which I have just referred. It is this imposition upon working men and women in the community. These southern workers know nothing about the philosophy of communism; they do not know what it means. It is all Greek to them, but in their hour of distress, when they are rebelling against conditions they accept the support and help of anyone who extends the friendly hand. But, my friends, while the American Federation of Labor, is standing as a barrier to the onward march of communism, battling with it and fighting it and opposing it, concretely and abstractly everywhere it shows its head, the owners of these mills are the ones who are sowing the seeds of communism, and it has invaded the conservative and peaceful centers of the South. It seems to me that that fact alone ought to appeal to this committee. A condition that borders on communism and develops communism, is one that can not be ignored.

“What are the facts and what should we do in order to correct the situation? How can we correct this basis of discontent?”

The obvious answer to President Green’s rhetorical question is to turn the Southern workers over to the leadership of himself and his fellow-bureaucrats as was done in Elizabethton, Tenn. In this struggle of workers less than a year and one-half in industry – workers recruited fresh from the countryside – the officialdom of the United Textile Workers, followers of Muste’s “educational theory of the class struggle,” broke the strike with the help of a federal

“conciliator,” and left these inexperienced workers to the tender mercies of the \$50,000,000 Enka-Glanstoff corporation.

How was it done? Listen to President Green as he expounds before admiring senators the most sacred mystery of the labor bureaucracy – the double-cross with the dollar symbol as its sign manual.

“The strike developed in Elizabethtown over the imposition of onerous conditions. They gather their employees who work in these mills from the mountains of eastern Tennessee.... They are pure American stock, and of course the opportunity to work in these rayon mills was broadening and it was an enlarged opportunity for this class of people.... But because of the worker’s docile nature, the owners of these mills pursued a certain policy until it reached the point where the last straw, figuratively speaking, broke the camel’s back; and without any leadership even, without help from us, they shut down these mills and then... appealed to the American Federation of Labor.”

The Elizabethton workers are now in the hands of the admitted leader of the downtrodden and oppressed. Watch what happens:

“I directed (continues Green) one of my trusted representatives to go there, and Mr. McMahon, representing the United Textile Workers, directed his representative to go there and to exercise every effort at their command *to establish co-operative relations and industrial peace.*

“They had splendid meetings with *some members of the chamber of commerce, business organizations, and representatives of the mills and believed that they had a satisfactory settlement....*” (Emphasis mine.)

The settlement was satisfactory to everybody *but the workers who were on strike.* They were only workers with a “docile nature” and were not consulted by the big business men of labor and capital. The workers had to strike again and were again sold out. This time they were presented with a blacklist system which the officials of the U. T. W. helped to organize.

Here then is another sinister force – the leadership of the corrupt labor aristocracy, highly skilled, highly paid and privileged workers – whose role in the South is to confuse, hamper and defeat the struggles of the low-paid unskilled and semi-skilled workers,

who form the overwhelming majority of the working class in the highly mechanized industries of “the new South.”

Militant in defense of their own high wage scales and their own narrow craft and occupational interests, the labor aristocracy and its leadership – the outpost of Wall Street imperialism in the ranks of the working class – is in favor of docile unions for the “docile natures” of the Southern working masses.

The Southern capitalists, at least a section of them, will from time to time, as in Elizabethton, come to terms temporarily with the A. F. of L. leadership in order to head off and defeat the militant struggles of the Southern masses like that in Gastonia and to postpone the spread of trade unionism based on the class struggle.

The clash of all these forces is reflected in the press of North Carolina. The Gastonia Gazette complains constantly because certain influential papers do not take the same bloodthirsty attitude it does. In its issue of June 10 it said:

“Here is the meek and mild comment of the Greensboro News of Sunday morning on the Friday night tragedy in which Chief Aderholt lost his life.”

The comment which the Gazette objected to was as follows:

“Here, furthermore, is the inevitable comparison with the manner in which these same governments handled another outbreak of violence a few weeks gone, in which town, county and state were revealed in a humiliating admission of inability to cope with forces operating in the heart of the community. On that occasion it was the strikers’ headquarters which was demolished by a masked mob; on this occasion it is officers of the law shot down by bullets apparently coming from strikers’ rallying ground,

“On both occasions the question is raised of whether the community is capable of maintaining the degree of peace and order which citizens have a right to demand and expect.”

Such balanced comment, reflecting the uncertain attitude of sections of the middle class, illustrates the tremendous pressure exerted within the structure of Southern capitalism by the struggle in Gastonia and the fundamental issues arising out of it.

The Raleigh News and Observer, published in the state capital and probably the most influential paper in North Carolina, is much more outspoken. After one of the numerous outrages which followed the destruction of the N. T. W. U. headquarters on April 18, the paper said editorially”

“ABOUT THE SHACK”

“Last week, a mob of men in the night time, armed with their own guns, under masks of their own making, invaded and wrecked the headquarters and relief store of the striking cotton mill workers of the Loray mills in Gaston County.

“Last night, a mob of other men in the night tune, armed with guns and bayonets which were the property of the state, under cover of badges as deputy sheriffs of the County of Gaston, invaded a peaceable meeting of strikers, scattered the assembly with bayonets, rifle butts and black-jacks, and seriously wounded a newspaper reporter about his own business.

“We might as well face the facts. The textile interests of North Carolina need not feel called upon to make common cause with the Loray mills in this situation. That situation was created by stupidity, hysteria, and prejudices heated white. That Gaston strike and all its complications of lawlessness on the part of law, indifference to the rights of citizens on the part of the law, partisanship in an industrial dispute on the part of the law ought to be isolated and treated with desperate treatment as a cancerous growth on the industrial life of the state.”

The columnist of the Raleigh News and Observer, Nell Battle Lewis, even senses something of the social conflict centering around the Gastonia case. After the habeas corpus hearing in Charlotte in which Clyde Hoey, brother-in-law of Governor Gardner and head of the battalion of cotton mill attorneys recruited by the Manville-Jenckes Co. to aid the conspiracy to railroad 15 working men and women to the electric chair, had asked Amy Schechter if she believed in god and if she was in favor of the kind of government they had in Russia, Miss Lewis wrote:

“To try these men in the locality where for months the most violent passions have been inflamed against them, where prejudice against them is most bitter, where, to all intents and purposes by powerful opinion the case is already prejudged would be a travesty of justice. A jury in Gaston County would be under the severest pressure under which disinterestedness would be virtually impossible, and a verdict of acquittal, even if it could be secured, would be a dangerous matter for the men who rendered it. ‘

“This trial will be the most important one held in North Carolina in many years. It will be important not only for the reason that fifteen lives are at stake, *but because of its far-reaching implications. * * * There are serious indications that this trial will be much more than a trial for homicide. Not only the history of the strike, but the attitude of the prosecution exhibited at the habeas corpus hearing suggest that it may very likely turn into a heresy trial.*” (Emphasis mine.)

It will be much more than a heresy trial, however.

The local workers who joined and fought for the National Textile Workers Union will be tried for that – not only because a chief of police was killed and three officers wounded when they raided the union headquarters. The murder charge provides a definite penalty – that is all. Their real crime in the eyes of the mill owners and their press is that they revolted against the autocracy of the mill owners and their government. As rebels they will be tried and as rebels they will be murdered – legally, of course – unless the American working class comes to their rescue as it must and will.

The Communists among the prisoners – Fred Beal, Vera Bush, Amy Schechter, Clarence Miller, and little 19-year old Sophie Melvin of the Young Communist League – will be tried for being Communists and leading a strike for organization and better wages and working conditions. The prosecution does not even pretend that any of these four fired a single shot. It is for their revolutionary leadership of a mass movement of intensely exploited workers that these workers face the electric chair and long prison terms.

The Southern capitalist class, backed by its brethren of the dollar in the North, is determined to couple together every generator in all the magnificent hydro-electric plants of the new South to burn to

death these workers who dared to challenge the new ruling class in its cotton mill stronghold v Gastonia.

Only the united power of their fellow workers can save these brave and able leaders and Louis McLaughlin, Russell Knight, K. Y. Hendricks and the other North Carolina workers who fought shoulder to shoulder with them.



The Workers International Relief on the job. From the first day of the historic struggle the W.I.R. was on hand

Chapter VI

“Free, Unchangeable and Contented”

It is a rich field for plunder at the point of production – the mill, mine and factory – that the new Southern capitalist class, allied with finance and industrial capital of the North and the survivals of Bourbonism, is trying to keep free from “labor trouble” with the bayonet, the blackjack, the six-shooter and the electric chair.

The new capitalist class sees in the spreading revolts of the southern workers an obstacle to the rapid flow of the golden current of investment capital from the North, The Northern capitalist class sees in these revolts the end of the period of exceptionally high dividends and interest.

“The cheapest labor in the world” (see the advertisements of the Southern chambers of commerce in the Northern trade journals), “contented American labor,” and “no labor trouble” have been the

lures that have attracted the Northern investors and intoxicated the lusty young capitalist class of the South.

The favorite fiction of the Southern editorial writers – like their fellow white-collared serfs of the North – is that all “labor troubles are caused by foreign agitators” operating with sinister intent among immigrant workers who have not yet learned that J. Pierpont Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, the National City Bank, the United States Steel Trust, Andy Mellon, the Standard Oil Company, George Baker, Kuhn, Loeb & Co., Herbert Hoover, president of this government of “all the people,” are all benevolent individuals and institutions interested only in providing plenty of work at good wages for the working class of the United States.

That such fierce class battles as that in the Gastonia area should occur in a section of industry – cotton spinning – where the *productive process* is decentralized in an extreme form can be understood only by understanding the manner in which this imperialist period – “the period of wars and revolution,” as Lenin characterized it – finance capital, extending its domination over industry and government, creates the condition for mass revolts even in *decentralized* industries. In Gaston County are 114 cotton spinning mills with 1,250,000 spindles – more than one-sixth of the total number of spindles in North Carolina, a state having one-third of 18,000,000 spindles in the South. The *nominal* ownership of these 114 mills is divided among approximately 85 different companies. The *actual ownership and control*, however, is in the hands of the *big banks and marketing concerns controlled by the New York banks*.

The 25,000 textile workers in the Gastonia area therefore face in the struggles against the stretch-out and for militant trade union organization, *not a collection of small capitalists*, in whose ranks they could count on a certain amount of dissention and division in the pre-imperialist period, but *the ruthless centralized power of Wall Street finance capital and its government*.

The sharp struggle in Gastonia, reaching the point of armed conflict, furnishes irrefutable proof of the process, by which the inner contradictions of capitalism in the imperialist period bring on economic struggles which speedily take on a *political* character. The struggle in Gastonia, and throughout the Southern textile industry, is not only an integral part of the international crisis in the textile industry (huge strikes in England, India, etc.,) but a symptom of the world crisis of capitalism which leads straight and fast to a new

imperialist war, to the direct danger of an imperialist attack on the Soviet Union, the fatherland of the world's working class, as the counter-revolutionary conspiracy in the Far-East proves.

The contradictions of capitalism are things these propagandists for American imperialism never heard of or would not and could not understand if they did. A new contingent of the American proletariat was being born and as it emerged from the countryside and was mobilized in the giant industries of the new South, it shed its swaddling clothes and stood forth, freeing itself from the traditions of its rural birthplace.

Today it stands facing its class enemy – the idle owners of industries which created it and which it in turn created.

This new contingent of the American proletariat is herded like cattle into the new giant industries of the South. Its labor is bought at a price which keeps it at the subsistence level even in the periods of greatest “prosperity.” The Southern working class peddled to the billionaire investors of the North – and even to Germany, Belgium and England – in the same insulting and degrading manner in which black slaves were sold. Read these extracts from a book issued by the chamber of commerce of Spartanburg, S. C.:

“The available labor supply of Spartanburg is all American, native white. Spartanburg County ranks first in the State of South Carolina in white population; and the State, of all the Southern States, leads the country with only 1 per cent of foreign born. The population of New England shows 60.2 per cent foreign born. The abundant supply of native white labor on which Spartanburg draws comes largely from the mountaineers of the Blue Ridge; sturdy, dependable, reliable men and women who are efficient, with the will to work, and receptive to new methods of manufacturing.

“Labor in Spartanburg is free, unchangeable, and contented. Strikes are unknown. The rate of production per worker is higher, and there are no forced suspensions of operation. These things are responsible for this ideal and profitable condition: (1) Native white labor; (2) no congested industrial cities; (3) universal use of the English language.

“You find same thinking in the industries in Spartanburg.”

In conclusion the statement says:

“The labor supply of Spartanburg is unexcelled anywhere in the United States. *It is plentiful. It is cheap. It is faithful and efficient. It has the will to work.* It is intelligent, capable of producing high-grade goods. It is free from outside influences and consequent labor unrest. It is the kind of labor you would like to have in your present plant.” (Emphasis mine.)

Three cheers for the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave where the native born American, massed in gigantic mechanized factories, can underbid “the pauper labor of Europe” and exist the year round at a standard of living lower than that of the immigrant workers in the industrial centers of the North – “free, unchangeable and contented.”

Is it any wonder that the new southern ruling class, having been forced by the necessities of industrialization to spend \$426,200,000 on public schools in 1928 as against \$81,000,000 in 1910, finds itself confronted now with a literate working class whose brow burns red with shame and anger as it reads the advertisements of its degradation spread broadcast by its masters?

Insults without end – insults hurled at a subject class, which can be wiped out only by industrial unionism based on the class struggle, a declaration of independence from the parties of the capitalist class and militant struggle as in Gastonia. Listen to the slave merchants in the marketplace – the secretaries of the Southern chambers of commerce, crying the wares of their overlords:

Hendersonville, N. C., Ola L. Estes, office secretary: “We might say that prices (wages) would not run from \$1.50 (which is most common labor) up. In this State the manufacturer is allowed 60 hours, but most of the plants run 54 hours.”

Hartsville, S. C., F. C. Chitty, secretary: “Wages, 16 to 20 cents per hour, hours worked, 10.”

Greenwood, S. C., George T. Barnes, secretary: “Spinners’ wages, 10 hours, \$12.50 per week; night workers, 11 hours, \$16 per week. Weavers, day workers, 10 hours, \$19.50 per week; night workers,

11 hours, \$20 per week. Ordinary labor can be secured from \$1.75 to \$2 per day.”

Spartanburg, S. C., T. H. Duncan, industrial secretary: “Textile labor in this section works 55 hours a week. Night operators work five 11-hour days and day operators five and a half 10-hour days. Average wages paid, \$13.37 to \$17.20 male; \$11.65 to \$13.80 female. Piece work prevails in hosiery mills. Labor turnover is an inconsequential item in Southern textile mills and there is no competitive bidding; for the wage scale is uniform.”

Jackson, Tenn., Hugh Harvey, secretary: “The larger industries here employing female help work 57 hours a week. The average wages paid range from \$11 to \$16 a week; beginners get less than that.”

Orangeburg, S. C., L. S. Wolfe, commercial secretary: “There are no labor unions here, and wages vary, female labor averaging \$1.50 to \$2 per day, and male labor in textile mills \$1.75 to \$2.25 per day.”

Clarksville, Tenn., L. W. Bartlett, Secretary: “The weekly earnings of female operators average from \$12 to \$15 when working full time. Usual basis is 52 hours per week.”

Johnson City, Tenn., Harry Faw, secretary: “Wages paid to textile workers in the mills here average from \$10 to \$18 per week for 56 hours work, for beginners from \$10 to \$12.

Sumter, S. C., R. B. Waters, secretary: “Workers in Sumter usually put in 55 hours per week. Girls earn from \$10 to \$12 per week and men from \$15 to \$20.”

Laurens Business League, Laurens, S. C., L. C. Barksdale, secretary: Secretary Barksdale submitted a survey made by Sidney M. Edelstein & Co., industrial engineers, Union, S. C., which shows the difference in the yearly mill costs, on the 50-loom units, single shifts for pure silk crepe fabric, as follows: “Southern, \$37,741; northern, \$69,907; a difference of \$32,166 on annual products of 34,000 yards. The saving on Southern labor over Northern labor amounts to 9.46 cents per yard.”

Florence, S. C., H. A. Wheeling, secretary: “I take pleasure in advising you that I believe you will find here in this particular section a better supply of high-grade female labor than any other section of

the South. This may sound like a broad statement, but it is backed up by a survey compiled by the Roger Babson Institute, and I believe you would find the labor situation here unusually attractive. Our wages for female labor range from \$6 to \$12 per week.”

Rocky Mount, N. C., E. H. Austin, secretary: “Replying to your letter of November 28th, in which you requested information in regard to wages paid women operators in the textile industry, will say that the wages run from \$7.50 to \$18 per week. The working hours for women are 60 hours per week.”

Columbia, Tenn., William P. Morgan, secretary: Wages paid in the overall manufacturing plant were \$8 and up. Extracts from Industrial Report were submitted by Secretary Morgan as follows: “Labor legislation is favorable to all kinds of industry. There are no minimum wage laws for females in Tennessee. There are no night laws for females over 16 in Tennessee.”

Columbia, S. C., B. F. Taylor, representative New Industries Commission: “We have ample labor trained in cotton-mill work and a large surplus of untrained white labor. * * * Our State laws permit 55 hours work a week per person. * * * On the night shifts, the workers put in 11 hours each night for five nights.”

Gastonia, N. C., Joe S. Wray, secretary: “Wages in Gastonia range from 18 to 20 to 30 cents for skilled workers. * * * Children from 14 to 18 years of age can only work 11 hours a day. Females under 16 are not allowed to work at night.”

Durham, N. C., Burke Hobgood, secretary: “Hours of labor are restricted to 55 per week. Night work is permitted. Children under 16 years of age are not permitted to work without a special permit by the board of public welfare.”

Goldsboro, N. C., extract of literature sent in by W. C. Denmark, secretary: “Children between ages of 14 and 16 that have gone through the fourth grade in school may work 10 hours. Children that have not gone through fourth grade work 8 hours. Adult female hours, 11 per day.”

High Point, N. C., extract of letter from Fred Thomas, C. C., to F. J. Sixmore, C. C.: “Labor conditions are of the best – all native born – and labor troubles are unheard of.”

Kinston, N. C., Plato Collins, secretary: "The wages paid women operatives for piecework average from \$12 to \$16 per week. Day workers get from \$1 to \$1.50 per day."

Here is another picture of the new Southern proletariat – the type of workers who face the electric chair in Gastonia because of their militant struggle against just such wages and working conditions as the labor agents of the Southern bosses put forward as a selling argument to Northern capitalists, Mechanized industry, mass proportion, the speed-up, the stretch-out – rationalization – wage cuts bringing the low standard of living still lower – the power of the government in the hands of capitalists who drive him and rob him – this is "the new South" the Southern worker sees.

The thesis of the new industrial South has its antithesis – the proletariat of the new South. The synthesis is the social revolution of which the present struggles are the preliminary skirmishes. The National Textile Workers Union, affiliated to the Trade Union Unity League, the American section of the Red International of Labor Unions, is in the forefront of these struggles. This is its place. It has won its place by heroic struggle. It has earned the hatred of the mill owners and the loyalty of the mill workers.

The most militant and conscious section of the Southern working class supports it. The National Textile Workers Union will retain this support and enlist new masses in its ranks because its program alone, and its leadership, seasoned in the class struggle, meets the needs of the masses of textile workers in this period when American imperialism drives fiercely at all sections of the working class in its feverish preparations for a new war of world conquest.

The native born American workers of the South are not "free." They are not "unchangeable." They are not "contented." They have given the lie to these three falsehoods, spread by the agents of robber capitalism, in one of the most courageous class battles in American labor history.

The leaders of the National Textile Workers Union whom the ruling class is trying to railroad to the electric chair in a futile but murderous attempt to stem the tide of working class revolt, must be restored to the ranks of the proletariat from which they were seized by the government of the mill owners.

Fred Beal, Louis McLaughlin, W. M. McGinnis, K. O. Byers, George Carter, Joe Harrison, J. C. Heffner, Robert Allen, Russell

Knight, N. F. Gibson, K. Y. Hendricks, Delmar Hampton, Clarence Miller, shall not be done to death. They must be freed together with their fellow workers.

Support the national campaign for the defense and release of these heroic members of the working class organized by the International Labor Defense.

No more workers' lives to satisfy the vengeance of our class enemies. The heroes of Gastonia shall not die but shall live and be free to carry on their work in the forefront of the class struggle in the New South.

The battle cries of the working class in Gastonia have been heard by the workers in every country. Their appeals for help are likewise heard and answered by the workers of all countries beginning with the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics where the workers and peasants rule under the leadership of the Communist Party to India where the mass revolt against imperialism grows stronger each day.

With the workers of the world rallying to the call of the Gastonia strikers and organizers, the place of the American working class is in the first line of the struggle for the lives and liberties of our comrades whose deeds will live long in the memory of the working class.

They struck strong blows for the working class and they did not count the cost. They shall not die – these prisoners of the class war – in the lethal chamber which capitalism keeps for its vengeance.

They shall be restored to the ranks of the working class – unharmed as they were unafraid.

We defend the right of workers to organize unions, to organize to defend their families, their persons and their union against the armed mercenaries of the capitalist class and its government. No compromise on this issue! Fred Beal and his comrades must and shall be freed!

Chapter VII

A Living Document of the New Proletariat of the South

The following description of conditions in the Manville-Jenckes Co.'s Loray mill, before, during and after the battle at the Gastonia headquarters of the National Textile Workers Union on the night of June 7, 1929, was given to the author of this pamphlet by a tall

emaciated worker. He is one of the thousands of Southern mountaineer folk who have come down in recent years from their little farms in the hills to take jobs in the rapidly growing textile industry. His gaunt face is lined and furrowed; his shoulders stooped; his eyes bright with the inner fire of revolt as he talked.

He told his story in the dialect of the mountain men, which is hard for a Northerner to understand at first:

“I was workin’ at the Loray mill in Gastonia the night of the shootin’. The boss-men all went out and never came back till next day. I heard one of ‘em say: ‘Well, we did a good night’s work. We sure chased them bastards out like rats’.

“The Manville-Jenckes Company brought me here from South Carolina, promised me like others brought here to break the strike that they would pay \$25 a week, easy work and the like o’ that. Said they was no strike, the workers had all came back. If I’d a-knowed about the strike I wouldn’t a-come. When I came to get my first week’s pay envelope I got \$20. After that I only got \$13.

“They was scabs in the mill who was brought in from as far as Alabama. Some told me they had to mortgage their furniture to git here. They all they wish they was back. Many of them have left in disgust. One family from Elizabethton, Tennessee, worked only an hour and found out about the strike still goin’ on and quit. The turnover has been high since the shootin’. As far as the workers can git enough money to git out of town they go back home where they come from.

“The boss-men say in the papers that the average wages is \$18.60 a week. This is damn lie. Maybe if you take all the money all the bosses git and average it up, then it may be about right. But as fer as the mill hands is concerned, they git an average of about \$12 or \$13. That’s fer 11 or 12 hours work daily fer a week.

“If any of the mill hands is caught a-reading the leaflets of the union or the International Labor Defense, or the Daily Worker, they git hell and are fired the second time. They watch us ever’where, at the pool rooms, at home and on the street. The boss-men says the Daily Worker should

be called the Road Worker, meanin' that the union leaders will all be in the chain gang workin' on the road before long.

"The bosses took a photograph a while back. They went thru the mill and picked out all the huskiest and healthiest workers who had some decent lookin' clothes on and took a pitcher o' them out in the flower garden they keeps side o' the mill. They wouldn't let the rest of us scrawny lookin' hungry ones with ragged clothes git in the pitcher. Then they sent it out to show how well they takes care of their contented slaves.

"This Committee of 100 they organized. They took all the bosses, and the bosses' pets, and a lot of special guards, spies and pimps they picked up, and gave them pistols, rifles and shotguns. These special guards gits 44c a hour just to stand 'roun' an' spy. Some of them is a-hangin' 'roun' the town all the time, tryin' to find out who goes to the union speakin' and who has joined the union. They try to git some weak-kneed cowards to swear they heard Beal tell the guards to shoot to kill. They swaggers 'roun' and threatens the millhands, 'I belong to the Committee of 100. Better behave yourself or I'll run you-all out of town.'

"I have seen the supply room chock full o' guns of all kinds. They open 'em up by the boxful.

"The bosses give ice cream parties in the mill for these spies and the bosses' pets. Unless you are agin' the union you don't git in on it. If we stop work for five minutes to git a drink of water we're liable to git hell. No one at the mill dares speak out 'ceptin' the bosses' pets. Most of the workers want to go to the speakin' and join up with the union, but they don't dare. They'd lose their jobs an' git evicted an' they ain't got no money or no place to go. They're afraid of bein' beaten up, too, and run out of town. The bosses send spies to every union meetin'.

"Takin' ever'body 'ceptin' the bosses an' spies, the mill hands git from \$7 to \$20 a week. This is the lowest I ever got. In the Dover mill at Shelby the wages is higher. A weaver at Shelby gits \$25 and at Loray \$15. At Loray he has to lay up his own fillin', which he doesn't at most places, also he has to skin his own quills (bobbins). You are

docked as high as \$1 for a bad place in the cloth. These bad places are the result of the loom bein' out o' fix, and not the workers' fault.

"A warper at Kanapolis gits around \$25 for workin' one warper, but at Loray a warper gits \$18.50 for runnin' four warps. Spool hands at Kanapolis make \$25 and only \$13.75 at Loray,

"When you go to git yore pay envelope you never know what yore a-goin' to git. They used to give you a statement showin' what was due, but that give us a chance to kick. They paymaster never get thru tryin' to straighten our complaints. There ain't no way now of checkin' up to see if you git what's a-comin' to you.

"We mostly lives in the mill village and rents a company house for 50c a room a week. Them houses ain't worth no more than the rent we pay. Old shacks like barns that ain't fitten for a hog. They ain't no bath and they're not screened. There is water standin' in a pool under them, and in the middle of the village they's a big pool of water with scum on it and swarms of mosquitoes. Durin' the day the night shift caint sleep fer the flies and mosquitoes. The smell is somethin' terrible.

"Along the main paved street they is a row of houses painted pretty and lawns and flowers the mill welfare workers takes care of. That's so the visitors can see how well off the mill hands are. But the back yards are filled with garbage and weeds. Back from the main street they ain't no lawns and flowers. Of course the bosses houses are fine. One of the bosses would live in our hog-pens for a day.

"The mill sells us supplies at higher prices than we ran pay for at other stores if we had the money. But we're always in debt to the company stores and we can get coupons as an advance on our wages. Fer instance we git cord wood in small lots at the rate of \$18 a cord. The regular price if we could buy a cord at a time from the farmers is \$6 a card.

"Another thing I fergot to tell you about. When they got the scabs to come here, they promised them jobs as doffers or some other job which they wanted, but when

they got here, they had to take jobs as spinners, at \$11 a week. Nobody wants a spinners' job.

“Before the shootin' 3 out of 5 in the Loray mill were attendin' the speakin'. It wouldn't a-been long before the union would a had them licked. But since the raid, the workers have been scared. Now they are gettin' more trust in the union and it is a-growin'. The night of the shootin' 75 per cent of the workers on the night shift were ready to walk out. But every door in the place was locked and guarded by an armed spy. The mill hands almost all refused to work and walked up and down all night. That night they let us smoke inside the mill which we would be fired for any other time.

“Beal ought to be tried with shotguns and slugs’, the Committee of 100 says, They says if the prisoners is tried in Gastonia they is sure to be burned in the chair. Well, they is thousands of workers besides them in the union who will see that Beal and the 14 others goes free,

“The bosses has a paper in which they attack the union and call it a bunch of Communists, anarchists, free lovers, ‘Nigger lovers,’ atheists, furreign agitators and what not. They git out ‘Good Citizens Letters’ which say we ought to get rid of Beal and sich as he. But the workers don't give a damn what the union organizers believes in as long as they sticks by the workers and fights the bosses for better wages and against the stretch-out system.”

HELP FREE THE GASTONIA PRISONERS

Defeat the terrorism and mob law of the Southern textile bosses. Defeat their attempt to smash the National Textile Workers Union and drive it out of the South.

Uphold the right of the prisoners to defend themselves and their union. Defend the right of their union to organize the 300,000 Southern textile workers and lead them into struggle against the bosses – against starvation wages and back-breaking toil.

“Electric Chairs – Long Prison Terms

This is the bosses’ program for all Southern textile workers who dare fight against the worst form of industrial slavery in America.

Only the united strength and determination of the working class can defeat the textile barons.

Workers everywhere, Labor Unions, other workers’ organizations – *mobilize – show your solidarity with the Southern textile workers*. Hold gigantic mass protest meetings in every city. Collect defense funds. Organize defense committees thruout the nation,

Support these workers who are fighting so heroically in the interests of the working class!

Gastonia Joint Defense and Relief Committee

80 East 11th Street, New York, N. Y.

Auspices: International Labor Defense
Workers International Relief

Endorsed by. National Textile Workers Union