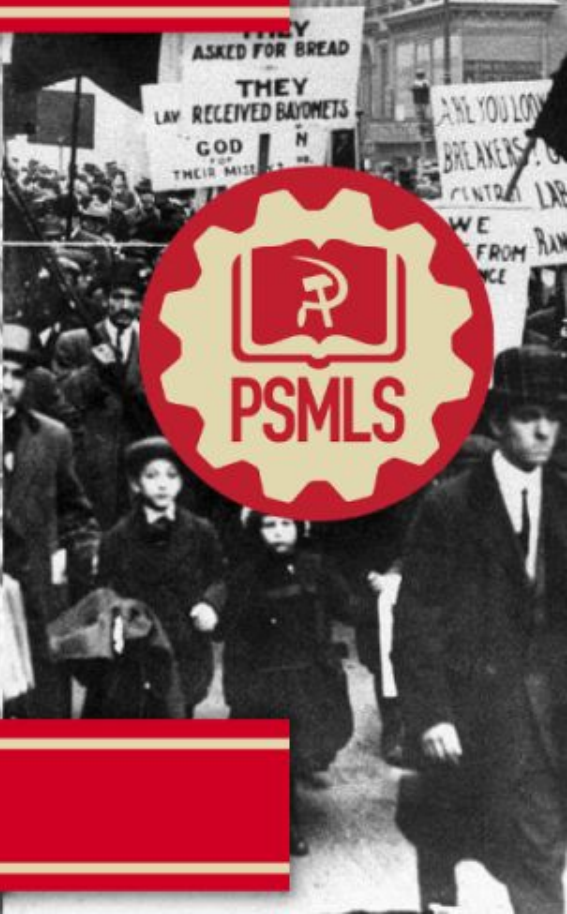




Bread and Roses

PEOPLES SCHOOL FOR MARXIST-LENINIST STUDIES™



1912 Lawrence Textile Strike
AKA Bread and Roses Strike



What we'll be learning today:

- Intro to the organizers of the strike
- The condition of the early textile industry in America
- The Bread & Roses Strike
- The Aftermath and Proclamation of the Striking Workers of Lawrence.



Meet the Organizers



Joseph “Smiling
Joe” Ettor
(1885–1948)

STRIKERS FIRM AND MILLS MAY CLOSE

15,000 Out at
Lawrence.

Grave Fears for
Tomorrow.

Leader Ettor Urges
Men to Fight.

Agents Consider Shutdown
To Avoid Outbreak.



JOSEPH J. ETTOR,
Leader of Strikers at Lawrence.



Joseph “Smiling Joe” Ettor

- Son of an Italian immigrant
- Organizer for International Workers of the World (IWW) aka Wobblies
- Involved in other strikes such as the 1907 Portland Lumber Strike, Pressed Steel Car Strike in McKees Rocks PA in 1909, as well as others.



Arturo
Giovannitti
(1884–1959)



Arturo Giovannitti

- Immigrated to the Canada from Ripabottoni, Italy in 1900
- Was a labor organizer for IWW, a socialist, and a poet
- Jailed along with Joseph Ettor for a frame-up at the Bread and Roses Strike
- Co-authored *Arrows in the Gale*, a collection of poems, with Helen Keller on labor struggles and fight for civil liberties



Elizabeth “Rebel
Girl” Gurley
Flynn
(1890 – 1964)





Elizabeth “Rebel Girl” Gurley Flynn

- Labor organizer for IWW
- Activist for women’s suffrage and birth control
- One of the founders of the American Civil Liberties Union
- Joined the Communist Party in 1936 and served as National Chair (first woman National Chair) from 1961 until her death in 1964.
- Will speak more on her on March 25th PSMLS class titled “Rebel Girl”



Big Bill Haywood (1869 - 1918)



Big Bill Haywood

- An executive member of the Socialist Party USA
- One of the founders and leaders of the International Workers of the World (IWW)
- Involved in many labor struggles and strikes including aside from Lawrence Textile Strike such as the 1903 - 1904 miners' strikes in Colorado called the Colorado Labor Wars
- Was involved in the opposition to the US entrance to WWI which led to his imprisonment
- He fled to the Soviet Union in 1921 when he was temporarily released from prison during an appeal trial
- Lived his remaining life in the Soviet Union where he died and was one of the four Americans buried in the Kremlin Necropolis



Discussion

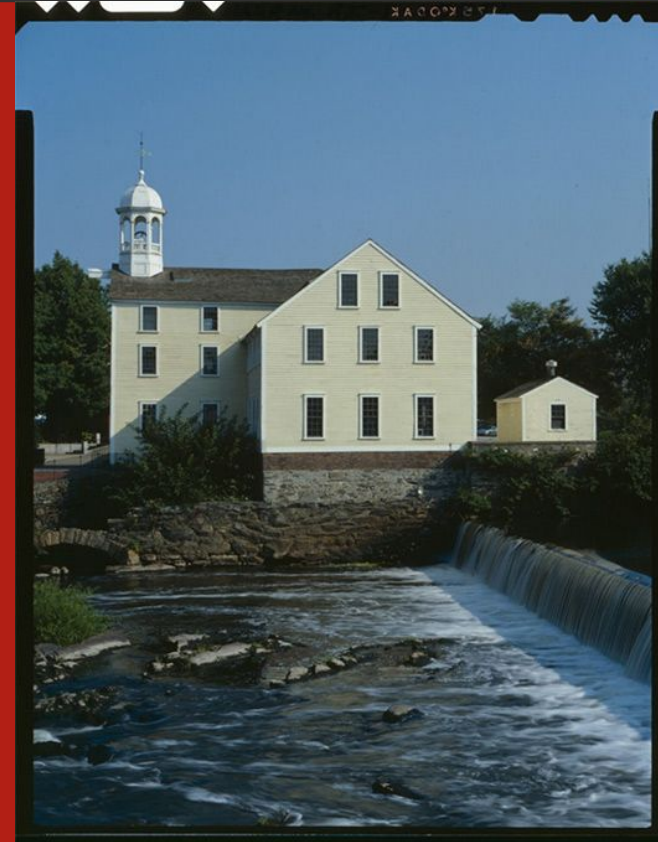


Conditions of the Early Textile Industry in America



Background - The First Textile Mill

- The first textile mill was erected in 1793 by Samuel Slater.
- His factory would be memorialized for its contributions to American industry.
- Capitalists of the north east would start by forming partnerships that would evolve into corporations.
- This method made it easier to raise new funds without entering into complex partnerships that give away control of the company and reduces the liabilities of the enterprise for tax purposes.





Background - The Workers of the Lawrence Mills

Situated in the Merrimack River Valley, about 30 miles north of Boston, Lawrence had the reputation in 1912 of being "the worsted center of the world." All told, the 12 mills in Lawrence, when operating at maximum capacity, furnished employment to approximately 32,000 men, women and children.

The working population in Lawrence's textile mills changed sharply in the nearly seven decades between the founding of the city in 1845 and the great strike of 1912. Until the 1880's, the Native Americans, English, Irish, Scotch, and French-Canadians were the majority in the textile factories. By the 1880's, these mostly skilled personnel were rapidly displaced, and after 1890, the Italians, Greeks, Portuguese, Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Syrians and Armenians took their places.



2375
LAWRENCE MILLS CO. LOOKING NORTHWEST
FROM LAWRENCE SECT. FEB. 24, 1912.



Background - The Workers of the Lawrence Mills

By 1912, the Italians, Poles, Russians, Syrians, and Lithuanians had replaced the Native Americans and Western Europeans as the predominant groups in the textile mills of Lawrence. Within a one-mile radius of the mill district, there lived 25 different nationalities, speaking a half hundred different languages. The largest ethnic group in the city was Italian.





Lead-up to the Strike: Speed-ups & Bonuses

Chief among the grievances of the Lawrence workers was the bonus system which was used in the mills.

Essentially a speed-up plan, it provided, in the case of the better-paid occupations, for a bonus to the worker whose output exceeded some fixed standard. In the other occupations the bonus was paid for regular attendance.

Any employee who had not missed more than one day during a four-week period received a premium. The premium system encouraged weavers and other craftsmen to drive themselves mercilessly for the few extra dollars which meant so much to the family.





Lead-up to the Strike: Wage Discrepancies

Two sets of wages were paid, one for producing the finest cloth, the other for lesser grades. A striker, testifying before the Congress, pointed out that with the machines constantly being "speeded up," the cloth was frequently damaged and consequently graded as "inferior," resulting in a reduction of their wages. Other complaints were voiced by workers in congressional hearings.

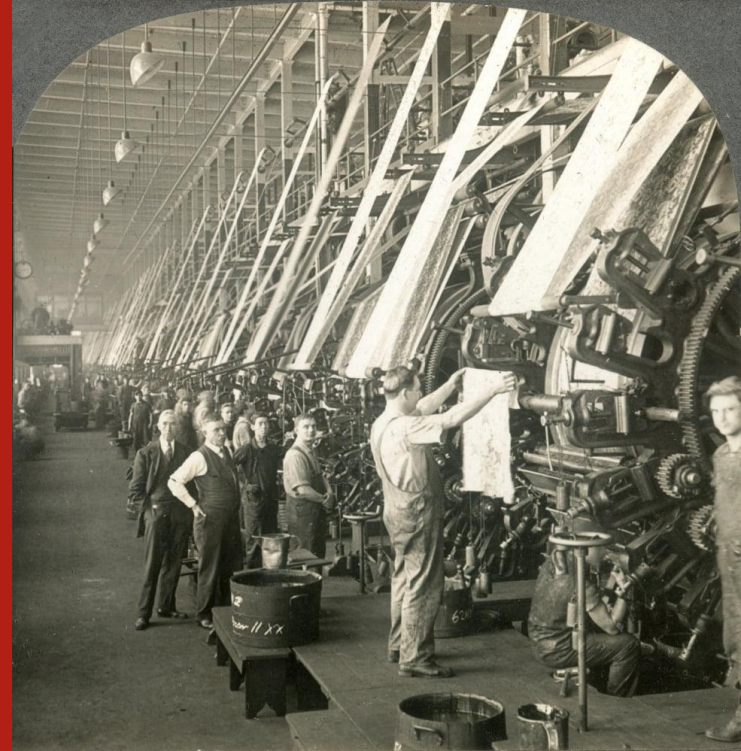




Lead-up to the Strike: Wage Discrepancies

Water supplied by the mills was so warm in the weaving rooms, that the workers were forced, to buy cold drinking water at a weekly charge of ten cents. Workers, especially children, were "docked" one hour's pay for coming five or ten minutes late, and if was repeated three times, they were fired. And all witnesses expressed severe indignation at the tyrannical attitude of the foremen in their dealings with the workers.

The overseers insisted that the women workers sleep with them as a condition of holding on to their jobs, swore at the men, women and children alike, constantly cursed at the foreign-born workers, calling them "ignorant Dagoes and Hunkies," and treating them as if they were "dumb cattle."





Lead-up to the Strike: Workers Living Conditions

Nearly all the textile workers lived in a slum so congested that two tenements were erected on the same lot, one in front, the other on the rear of the lot. The rooms in these wooden firetraps were gloomy and dingy. Toilet facilities were inadequate and plumbing defective. One or two toilets, for a four-story tenement, was not unusual.

In his report for the year 1912, the Lawrence Inspector of Buildings wrote: "Conditions in the congested districts of the city are drawing close to the danger line in the manner of building construction for tenement purposes. The tendency of some property owners to use every inch of available space has in some quarters developed conditions that are not alone a menace to health, but to life itself."





Lead-up to the Strike: Workers Living Conditions

"Each year," he complained, "I have recommended that the City Council take up the matter of revising the Building Ordinances." But each year the proposal was buried, by a Council dominated by property owners, convinced that these conditions were good enough for "Hunkeys, Poles and Wops."

Lawrence had two dubious honors. One was that it was a leading contender for being the most congested city in the nation, with 33,700 people, one-third of the population, dwelling on less than one-thirteenth of the city's area-the slum area.

The other was that the infant mortality death rate in Lawrence was one of the highest of the industrial cities of the nation. Of the 1,524 deaths in Lawrence in 1910, 46.6 percent were of children less than six years.



Lead-up to the Strike: Workers Living Conditions

These were the conditions which led to the great upheaval of the Lawrence textile workers. (Although conditions were no better in other New England textile centers.) In explaining why they finally revolted, the strikers stated: "For years the employers have forced conditions upon us that gradually and surely broke up our homes. They have taken away our wives from the homes, our children have been driven from the playground, stolen out of schools and driven into the mills, where they were strapped to the machines, not only to force the fathers to compete, but that their young lives may be coined into dollars for a parasite class, that their very nerves, their laughter and joy denied, may be woven into cloth. "We hold that as useful members of society, and as producers we have the right to lead decent and honorable lives; that we are to have homes and not shacks; that we ought to have clean food and not adulterated food at high prices; that we ought to have clothes suited to the weather."



On February 24 and 25, soldiers and policemen forcibly prevented parents from sending their children away from Lawrence to cities that offered food and shelter

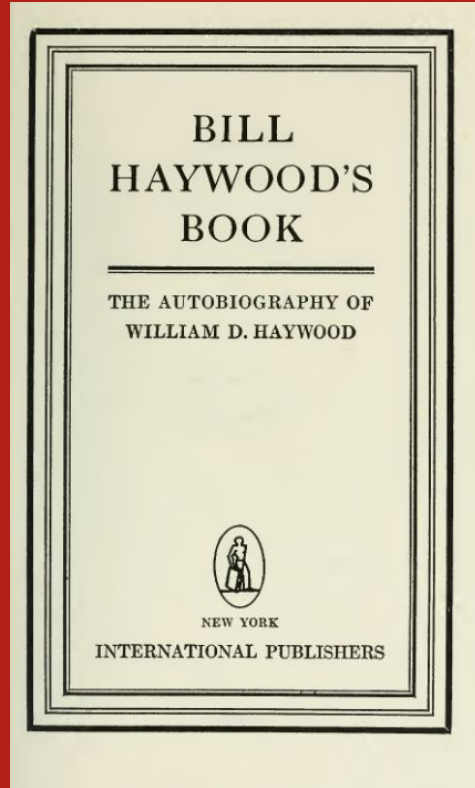


Discussion



The Strike

Source material for this section



Can be found here:

https://leninists.org/index.php?title=Bill_Haywood%27s_Book



From the Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood:

It was a strike against all the mills, and every worker, except a few of the most skilled, took part in the struggle. The strikers demanded a fifty-four hour week, a fifteen per cent increase in pay, double pay for overtime, abolition of all bonus or premium systems, and no discrimination against workers for activities during the strike.

The Lawrence strike grew until by the latter part of January, 1912, there were twenty-five thousand workers taking part in it. They were of about twenty-eight different nationalities and spoke forty-five different dialects. The entire textile industry of Lawrence and vicinity was closed down tight.





From the Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood:

I spoke many times to the strikers, and left Lawrence to go out and raise funds and create sympathy for the strike, until on February second, Ettor and Giovanitti were arrested under a framed-up charge of murder. Anna LaPiza, an Italian girl striker, had been killed by a policeman, but the charge was laid against the leaders of the strike. I returned at once to Lawrence and became chairman of the strike committee, which was composed of fifty-six members. Back of these were another fifty-six members ready to take the places of the strike committee if any arrests were made.



From the Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood:

A writer in the *Outlook*, a conservative weekly which reported the strike, said :

Haywood does not want unions of weavers, unions of spinners, unions of loom-fixers, unions of wool-sorters, but he wants one comprehensive union of all textile workers, which in time will take over the textile factories, as the steel workers will take over the steel mills and the railway workers the railways. Haywood interprets the class conflict literally as a war which is always on, which becomes daily more bitter and uncompromising, which can end only with the conquest of capitalistic society by proletarians or wage workers, organized industry by industry.

Haywood places no trust in trade agreements, which, according to his theory, lead merely to social peace and "put the workers to sleep." Let the employer lock out his men when he pleases, and let the workmen strike when they please. He is opposed to arbitration, conciliation, compromise; to sliding scales, profit sharing, welfare work; to everything, in short, which may weaken the revolutionary force of the workers. He does not ask for the closed shop or the official recognition of the union, for he has no intention of recognizing the employer. What he desires is not a treaty of industrial peace between the two high contracting parties, but merely the creation of a proletarian impulse which will eventually revolutionize society. Haywood is a man who believes in men, not as you and I believe in them, but fervently, uncompromisingly, with an obstinate faith in the universal goodwill and constancy of the workers worthy of a great religious leader. That is what makes him supremely dangerous.



From the Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood:

After the arrest of Ettore and Giovanitti a demand was made for their release on bail. These men had been charged with being accessories to the death of Anna LaPiza, although nineteen witnesses had seen Policeman Beloit murder the girl. Ettore and Giovanitti were refused bail and held in jail for seven months.



From the Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood:

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the leading woman organizer of the I.W.W., gave splendid service at Lawrence, speaking to the strikers, and also at meetings outside the strike district, raising money for the relief fund and for the defense of prisoners.



MISS ELIZABETH G. FLYNN,
Who Took the Children of Strikers to New York and Will Take More
to Philadelphia.



From the Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood:

We were sending the children of strikers to sympathizers in other cities, to be cared for during the strike. Some of the groups of children were large and attracted a good deal of attention and sympathy. One day when a group was to be sent away, the militia formed a cordon around the depot and the police attempted to prevent the children getting on the train. When one of these big burleys would lay his hand on a child, of course it would scream, and its mother would fly to the rescue of her captive young. There was a turmoil in the station between the policemen and the fighting women. They stopped the children leaving this day, but they never attempted it a second time.



Children of strikers leaving to live with strike sympathizers during the strike



From the Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood:

One morning on the picket line a Syrian boy, who belonged to the strikers fife and drum corps, was stabbed in the back with a bayonet. He died soon after being taken to the hospital.

Not only the local police force was used against the strikers, but police from other cities, the state police, and the state militia had been called in. These organized forces used the mills as their barracks.



Massachusetts State Militiamen with bayonets fixed at strikers



From the Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood:

The women strikers were as active and efficient as the men, and fought as well. One cold morning, after the strikers had been drenched on the bridge with the firehose of the mills, the women caught a policeman in the middle of the bridge and stripped off his uniform, pants and all. They were about to throw him in the icy river, when other policemen rushed in and saved him from the chilly ducking.

We appealed to Congressman Victor Berger for an investigation of the Lawrence strike, and through this Socialist congressman's efforts, a hearing was arranged before the Rules Committee of the House, in Washington, D. C. When we got news of this, the General Strike Committee decided to send sixteen witnesses to Washington,

all boys and girls under sixteen years of age. One of them was a little girl whose hair had been caught in a machine and her scalp torn from her head. These child workers from the mills were able to picture their working conditions and their home life, and we felt convinced of their ability to explain why they and twenty-five thousand others were striking in the textile center of Lawrence and adjacent towns. Margaret Sanger, who afterward became famous for her campaigns for birth control, went with the children to Washington.



From the Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood:

On the day of their arrival there, the boys and girls appeared before the Rules Committee. Samuel Gompers was present presumably in the interests of the A. F. of L. He was called as a witness, and condemned the strike and its leaders. Suddenly a childish voice rang out:

“You old son-of-a-bitch! You’re telling a god-damned lie!”

It was a Polish boy who had interrupted Gompers. The chairman of the Committee rapped vigorously with his gavel and, looking sternly at the boy, said:

“Young man, that sort of language will not be tolerated here. Do not attempt it again!”

“It’s the only kind of language I know,” answered the boy, “and I’m not a-goin’ to let that guy lie about us and get away with it!”

This incident is not reported in Gompers’ *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*.

A newspaper reporter at the hearing remarked that “here was presented the old and the new of the labor movement.”

When the committee in Lawrence heard that Gompers was taking part in the hearing, they decided to send me down to Washington to help the children who were representing the strikers, if they should need help. But the children had told everything about conditions in the mills, even to being compelled to buy drinking water.



Reactionary AFL leader
Samuel Gompers



Discussion



Results of the Strike



The Strike Ends in Victory

- On March 12, 1912, the strike was ended after management gave in to strikers' demands for a 15 percent wage increase and any overtime (over 54 hours a week) was paid double wages.
- The workers succeeded in ending the Premium System which made a significant portion of the workers' income subject to attendance and monthly production quotas
- The biggest outcome of the protest however was that it proved despite the 28 nationalities and 45 dialects of the workers that were divided by the bosses on ethnic lines, the overwhelming majority of the 30,000 workers came together against the bosses.

Proclamation of Striking Textile Workers of Lawrence

We, the 20,000 textile workers of Lawrence, are out on strike for the right to live free from slavery and starvation; free from overwork and underpay; free from a state of affairs that had become so unbearable and beyond our control, that we were compelled to march out of the slave pens of Lawrence in united resistance against the wrongs and injustice of years and years of wage slavery.

In our fight we have suffered and borne patiently the abuse and calumnies of the mill owners, the city government, police, militia, State government, legislature, and the local police court judge. We feel that in justice to our fellow workers we should at this time make known the causes which compelled us to strike against the mill owners of Lawrence. We hold that as useful members of society and as wealth producers we have the right to lead decent and honorable lives; that we ought to have homes and not shacks; that we ought to have clean food and not adulterated food at high prices; that we ought to have clothes suited to the weather and not shoddy garments. That to secure sufficient food, clothing and shelter in a society made up of a robber class on the one hand and a working class on the other hand, it is absolutely necessary for the toilers to band themselves together and form a union, organizing its powers in such form as to them seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that conditions long established should not be changed for light or transient causes, and accordingly all experience has shown that the workers are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves, by striking against the misery to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and ill treatment, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them to a state of beggary, it is their duty to resist such tactics and provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these textile workers, and such is now the necessity which compels them to fight the mill-owning class.

The history of the present mill owners is a history of repeated injuries, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these textile workers. To prove this let facts be submitted to all right-thinking men and women of the civilized world. These mill owners have refused to meet the committees of the strikers. They have refused to consider their demands in any way that is reasonable or just. They have, in the security of their sumptuous offices, behind stout mill gates and serried rows of bayonets and policemen's clubs, defied the State, city, and public. In fact, the city of Lawrence and the government of Massachusetts have become the creatures of the mill owners. They have declared that they will not treat with the strikers till they return to the slavery against which they are in rebellion. They have starved the workers and driven them to such an extent that their homes are homes no longer, inasmuch as the mothers and children are driven by the low wages to work side by side with the father in the factory for a wage that spells bare existence and untimely death. To prove this to the world the large death rate of children under one year of age in Lawrence proves that most of these children perish because they were starved before birth. And those who survive the starving process grow up the victims of malnutrition.

These mill owners not only have the corrupting force of dollars on their side, but the powers of the city and State government are being used by them to oppress and sweep aside all opposition on the part of those overworked and underpaid textile workers. The very courts, where justice is supposed to be impartial, are being used by the millionaire mill owners. And so serious has this become that the workers have lost all faith in the local presiding judge. Without any attempt at a trial, men have been fined or jailed from six months to a year on trumped-up charges, that would be a disgrace even in Russia. This judge is prejudiced and unfair in dealing with the strikers. He has placed all the strikers brought before him under excessive bail. He has dealt out lengthy sentences to the strikers as if they were hardened criminals, or old-time offenders. He has refused to release on bail two of the leaders of the strike, while he released a prisoner charged with conspiracy and planting dynamite, on a thousand dollars' bail. He sentenced, at one morning's session of court, 23 strikers to one year in jail on the fake charge of inciting to riot. This judge has declared he is opposed to the union that is conducting the strike.

The brutality of the police in dealing with the strikers has aroused them to a state of rebellious opposition to all such methods of maintaining order. The crimes of the police during this trouble are almost beyond human imagination. They have dragged young girls from their beds at midnight. They have clubbed the strikers at every opportunity. They have dragged little children from their mothers' arms and with their clubs they have struck women who are in a state of pregnancy. They have placed people under arrest for no reason whatsoever. They have prevented mothers from sending their children out of the city and have laid hold of the children and the mothers violently and thr[own] the children into waiting patrol wagons like so much rubbish. They have caused the death of a striker by clubbing the strikers into a state of violence. They have arrested and clubbed young boys and placed under arrest innocent girls for no offense at all.

The militia has used all kinds of methods to defeat the strikers. They have bayoneted a young boy.² They have beaten up the strikers. They have been ordered to shoot to kill. They have murdered one young man, who died as a result of being bayoneted in the back. They have threatened one striker with death if he did not close the window of his home. They have threatened to stay in this city until the strike is over. They have bayoneted one citizen because he would not move along fast enough. And they have held up at the point of the bayonet hundreds of citizens and Civil War veterans.

The city government has denied the strikers the right to parade through the streets. They have abridged public assemblage by refusing the strikers the use of the city hall and public grounds for public meetings. They have turned the public buildings of the city into so many lodging houses for an army of hirelings and butchers. They have denied the strikers the right to use the Common for mass meetings, and they have ordered the police to take little children away from their parents, and they are responsible for all the violence and brutality on the part of the police.

The Massachusetts Legislature has refused to use any of the money of the State to help the strikers. They have voted \$150,000 to maintain an army of 1,500 militiamen to be ready to shoot down innocent men, women, and children who are out on strike for a living wage. They have refused to use the powers of the State for the workers. They have appointed investigation committees, who declare, after perceiving the signs of suffering on the part of the strikers on every side, that there is no trouble with these people.

All the nations of the world are represented in this fight of the workers for more bread. The flaxen-haired son of the North marches side by side with his dark-haired brother of the South. They have toiled together in the factory for one boss. And now they have joined together in a great cause, and they have cast aside all racial and religious prejudice for the common good, determined to win a victory over the greed of the corrupt, unfeeling mill owners, who have ruled these people so long with the whip of hunger and the lash of the unemployed.

Outlawed, with their children taken away from them, denied their rights before the law, surrounded by bayonets of the militia, and driven up and down the streets of the city by an overfed and arrogant body of police, these textile workers, sons and daughters of the working class, call upon the entire civilized world to witness what they have suffered at the hands of the hirelings of the mill-owning class. These men and women can not suffer much longer; they will be compelled to rise in armed revolt against their oppressors if the present state of affairs is allowed to continue in Lawrence.



Discussion & New Members Introductions



New Member Introductions

- What is your name, pronouns and state (or country/territory)?
- Where do you work? Is it unionized?
- How did you find out about the People's School?
- What do you think about tonight's class?



Discussion & Wrap Up



Announcements

- The PSMLS has recovered our old Youtube account we lost to wreckers in 2022 and we have re-uploaded all our old videos. Like, subscribe, and check out what subjects we covered prior and what we aware saying in the past.
- PCUSA Cell Chairs need to call members of their cells to remind them about attendance.
- The next issue of New Masses (2025) has begun production. If you have art you want us to feature, email it to info@partyofcommunistsusa.net.



Volunteers Needed!

We are in need of volunteers for the staff of the People's School! Here's a few roles we need filled:

- People to help manage posting on our social media and podcast platforms
- Video Editors, Audio Editors, Graphic Designers, Artists, Narrators
- Facilitators, Web Controls, Moderators

Email info@peopleschool.us if you're interested and try to attend our next staff meeting if possible.




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FOR OUR
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You haven't nothing to lose
but your chains - start
here.




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Materials to help promote the school!

What is the Peoples School?

The *Peoples School for Marxist Leninist Studies* is part of a long-line of American Communist Party sponsored schools, such as the *Jefferson School of Social Science* and the *People's School of Marxist Studies*.

The PSMLS was initiated by and is sponsored by the *Party of Communists USA*, but it is not a party school, which allows a wide variety of perspectives that don't necessarily reflect the party line.

We hold classes online every week on Tues at 8 PM EST - 9:30 PM EST and Thurs at 9 PM EST - 10:30 PM EST. These are public classes on Zoom that are organized into sections of presentations, and discussion periods. Join our classes and participate in collective education!



Contact Info

Website: peopleschool.us
Email: info@peopleschool.us
Phone Number: 1 (541)-217-3269 West Coast
1 (718) 979 6563 East Coast
P.O. Box 140509 Staten Island, NY, 10314



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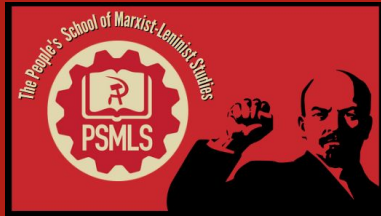
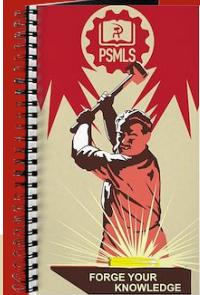
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"With no revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement"
- V. I. Lenin



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View From Left Field

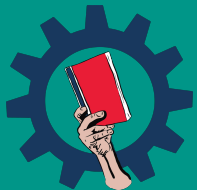
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The Old PSMLS Youtube is now the Youtube of View From Left Field, a podcast of analysis and discussion of current events from a progressive perspective.

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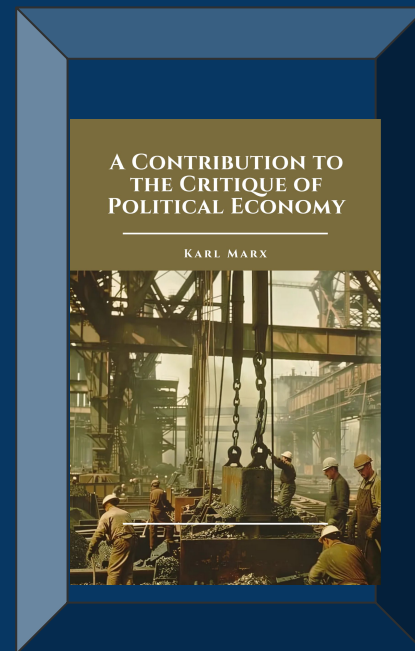
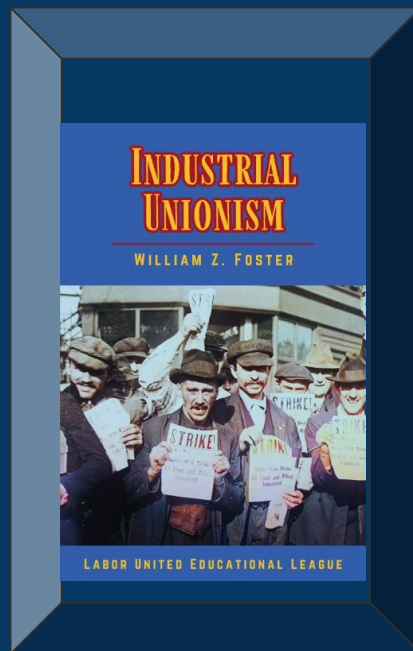
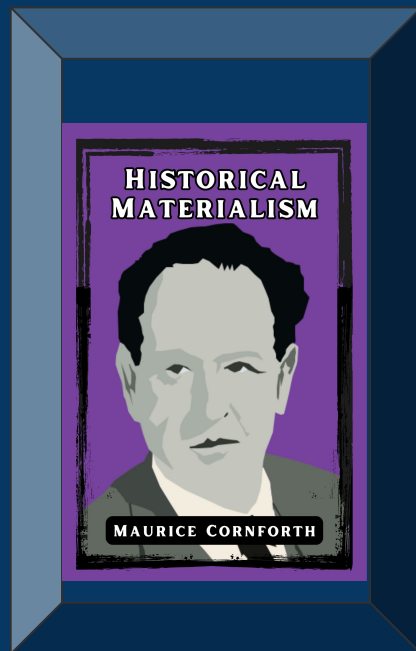
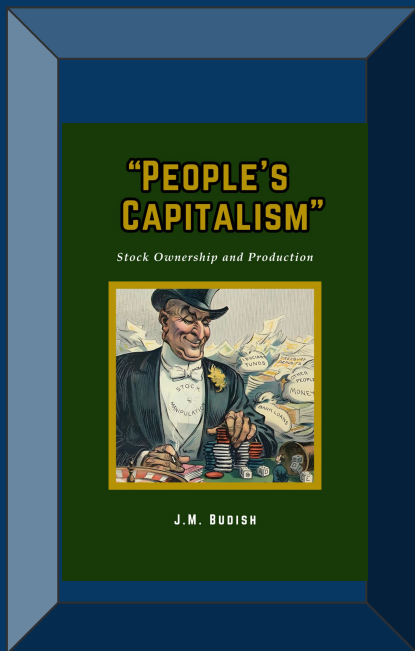




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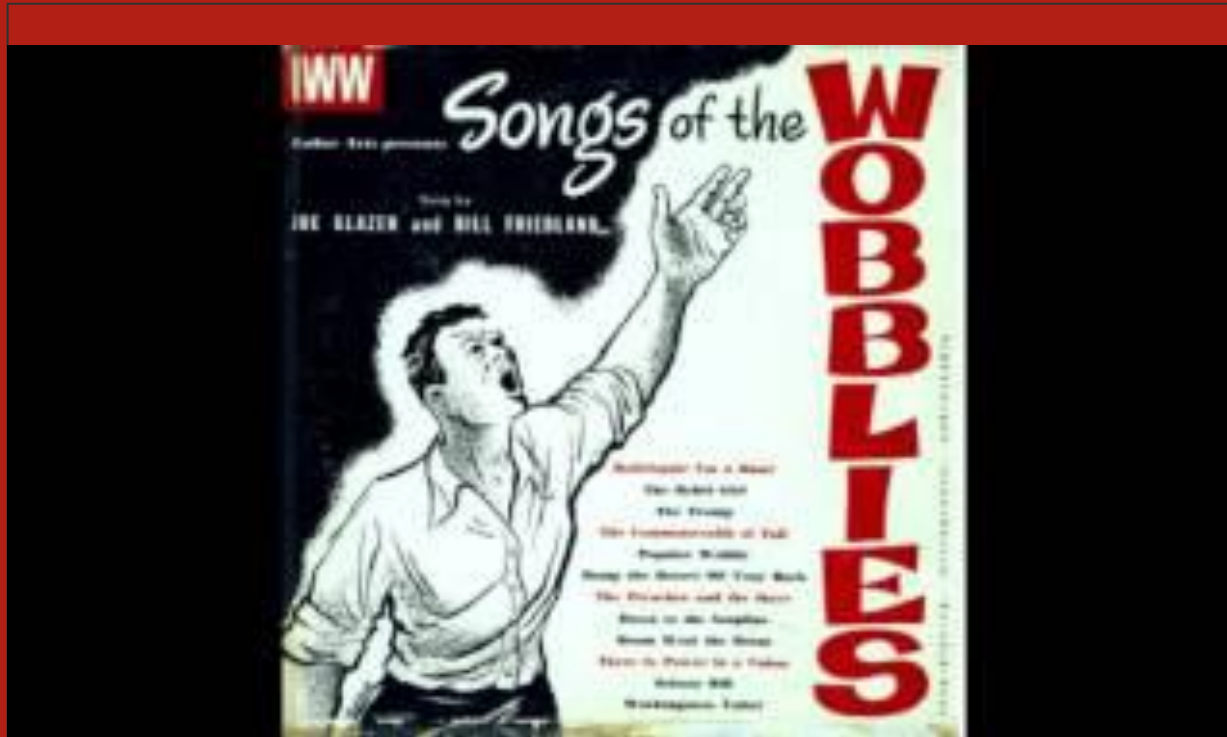
luel.us/laborschool/



The Harry Bridges School of Labor is a monthly class held 2x per month. Classes cover a variety of topics aimed at building class consciousness among union members.

April's class is on "History of the CIO, Part 5" Class will be April 2, 2024 at 9pm EST/6pm PST and Saturday April 5, 2024 at 7pm EST/4pm PST.





The Rebel Girl