

GIRL STRIKERS GO TO THE CITY HALL

Delegation from the Shirtwaist Makers' Union Protests Against Police Discrimination.

MAYOR PROMISES FAIR DEAL

Strike, Following Young Girl Workers' Call, Is for Shorter Hours and Recognition of Newly Formed Union.

In a gay mood despite their indignation, a thousand or more striking shirtwaist makers, supplemented by perhaps a thousand sympathizers from the east side, marched to the City Hall yesterday afternoon to present a written protest to the Mayor against the alleged partiality of the police in favor of the employers and against the strikers. The Mayor said he would take the matter up with Police Commissioner Baker. He wanted the young women to have a fair deal, he said. The girls are striking, primarily, for the union shop.

A mass meeting to recruit for the parade was held in Lipkin's Theatre, Bowery and Rivington Street, at 1 o'clock. The theatre could not hold all who wanted to attend. The suffragettes, who have outdistanced even the Socialists in their activity for the strikers, were in the van of the movement.

The banners in the hands of the paraders told their sentiments concisely. "Peaceful picketing is the right of every woman," said some of the banners. Others ran thus: "Fifty-two hours a week," "One hundred and fifty employers agree to union demands," "The police are for our protection, not for our abuse," "Union contracts have been signed for 15,000 workers."

Police Head the Line.

Headed by a squad of mounted police, in true parade style, and guarded on the side lines and in the rear by walking policemen, the paraders started for the Mayor's office. They marched down the Bowery and Park Row, where the committee that was to present their grievances to the Mayor left them, and then back up the Bowery to the theatre, where the marchers were disbanded. There was no disorder. By the time the procession got back to the theatre its number had dropped to about 500.

A committee of five took the protest to the Mayor's office. They waited patiently for him to return from lunch. Three of the committee were striking waist makers, the other two were Miss Helen Marot and Miss Mary E. Dreier, both of the Woman's Trades Union League. The three shirtwaist workers had been arrested in the strike. Mayor McClellan questioned the committee and took charge of the protest, saying he would look into the matter. Here it is:

We, the members of the Ladies' Waist-makers' Union, a body of 50,000 workers, appeal to you to put an immediate stop to the insults, intimidations, and to the abuses to which the police have subjected us while we have been peacefully picketing, which is our lawful right.

We protest to you against the flagrant discrimination of the Police Department in favor of the employers, who are using every method to incite to violence.

We appeal to you directly in this instance instead of to your Police Commissioner. We do this because our requests during the past six months have had no effect in decreasing the outrages perpetrated upon our members, nor have our requests been granted a fair hearing. Yours respectfully,

S. SHINDLER, Secretary.

After two weeks of the strike both the employes and the employers report that they are certain to win, and both sides can give many reasons why they are sure of their contention.

Manufacturers Take Back Strikers.

It was said last night at Clinton Hall, 151 Clinton Street, the headquarters of the strikers, that over 160 manufacturers have signed the union agreement, and have taken back to work on better terms some 15,000 waistmakers. That leaves about 17,000 strikers still out, it was said.

The managers and advisers of the union say they are inducing about 1,000 shirtwaist makers in non-union shops to go on strike every day now for the union agreement, and in the meanwhile they are sending back to work on the union terms almost that many every day.

On the other hand, the officials of the Associated Waist and Dress Manufacturers, the organization of employers, with headquarters at the Hoffman House, said last night they are going to hold out for the open shop; that many of the girls who struck in the beginning are going back to work; that the employers who are signing the union agreement are small manufacturers of little financial standing, who are not members of the Associated Waist and Dress Manufacturers, and that the real members of that organization of 500 men are simply holding their ground, advertising for help in their open shops, and getting it so fast that they are encouraged to let the strike run its course.

On account of its spectacular and picturesque features, this strike has attracted considerable attention, but very few know exactly what the girls are fighting for. The five floors of Clinton Hall, which swarms with the strikers day and night, all as gay and animated as if they were attending a dance or a wedding, can furnish very few girls who can tell clearly why they have left their places.

Suddenly thousands of them have come almost to worship "the union." They are not clear about what the union is, what it can do for them, and what they want it to do. They feel that they are not getting a fair deal in the work they are doing. They have noted that girls in other trades who did belong to unions seemed to be getting on better than they.

Why the Union Idea Appeals.

The idea of union rules which provide that all workers doing the same sort of work shall get about equal pay, the idea of enforced equality in earning power, the idea of sacrificing themselves, if necessary, for the sake of a principle they believe for the good of the weaker worker as well as for the more clever worker—that appeals to them powerfully. For they are women. The idea, too, of this vague and powerful protector, "the union," as they think of it, draws them into it.

Besides, they have been on strike too short a time, and the settlements with employers have been too rapid to make them feel the touch of distress. For them the strike is a sort of gay holiday, all mixed in with a vague and pleasant new worship, with lots of speeches, lots of dancing, much running to and fro, some danger, and a very great deal of excitement.

Three weeks ago Local 25 of the Ladies' Shirtwaist Makers' Union, a branch of the powerful Garment Workers' Union, had about 1,000 members. For several months this local has been conducting scattering strikes here and there. All the time it has been growing.

The skirmishing did not seem to be accomplishing a great deal, and on the evening of Monday, Nov. 22, some 3,000 shirtwaist makers met in Cooper Union to decide whether a general strike should be called. It was figured that there were 40,000 waistmakers in the city. It was hoped that a general strike would draw into the union practically all these workers, and that altogether they could accomplish radical improvements.

There was a great deal of talking back and forth. Mr. Gompers, who was there, didn't advise anything definitely, except that if the workers had reason to strike they should strike hard. Finally Clara Lemlich jumped up to say that she was

tired of listening to talk. "I offer a resolution," she said, "that a general strike be declared—now."

Young Girl Called the Strike.

And it was done in an outburst of enthusiasm. Her resolution brought on the storm that had been brewing. Clinton Hall was taken as headquarters. Everything there was in confusion. The Woman's Trades Union League sent veteran campaigners to help organize the strike. S. Shindler, the Secretary of Local 25, took command, but he had a great deal of advice from the Woman's Trade Union League.

The strike swept through the east side, through the lower west side, and up along the avenues, where the workshops are thick. The girls gained many helpers, including the Central Federated Union, the Woman's Trade Union League, and one section of the suffragettes. The strikers posted pickets outside the shops that hadn't struck. According to Mrs. Walter Weyl of the Woman's Trade Union League, who went to the aid of the strikers in the beginning and was one of Mr. Shindler's chief advisers, all pickets were furnished with printed instructions telling them what they could do under the law; and warning them against overstepping the law.

"The laws of this State provide that pickets may walk up and down in front of a factory," said Mrs. Weyl yesterday, "and try to persuade workers from going into a non-union shop. They may argue about the good points of the union. But they cannot lay hands on a worker to prevent her going to work."

"And it is here that we have to complain about the police. We know absolutely that there are bureaus which furnish rough men for use by employers in breaking up a union. These men interfere with pickets, make a disturbance, and then the police, who are, of course, on guard where there is a strike, arrest the strikers, but somehow permit the roughs and toughs to go away."

"This statement is not made inadvisedly. We have had private detectives trace these toughs to their bureaus. We have watched their tactics dozens and dozens of times. Already in this strike some of the employers, fearing that their employes were about to go out, have threatened the use of these toughs."

"The theory underlying the employment of this element against the pickets is that the strikers, particularly when they are girls and women, will not stick long to a union after they have been arrested several times, hauled to a station house, and then to court, gone to the trouble and expense of getting bail, and have then probably been fined. The fine is not depended upon to a great extent; the employers believe that the inconvenience, humiliation, and cost of being arrested and discharged several times are enough to break up a union if it is carried on long enough."

"We hold that the girls have the right under the law to do picket duty, and that the police, so far from acting against them while doing that duty, should protect them in that right. Some of the Magistrates, too, seem to favor employers against workers when a case comes before them."

Deny Employing Toughs.

The Associated Waist and Dress Manufacturers, when Mrs. Weyl's statement was quoted to them yesterday, denied the use of bureaus of toughs, charging, on the contrary, that the pickets have attacked and intimidated their employes who wanted to work in spite of the strike.

M. E. Hyman of the firm of I. B. Hyman & Co., 126 Sixth Avenue, President of the Associated Waist and Dress Manufacturers, showed several letters yesterday, which said that the writers wanted to go to work, but that they had concluded to stay away because of the annoyance and danger of going to and from their work.

"I shouldn't blame the employers if they did use toughs," said Mr. Hyman yesterday. "These strikers do such things! Why, one of our girls was held up to-day by either a striker or a sympathizer, who cursed her and told her they'd break her back if she tried to go to work. She came in here crying."

Mrs. Weyl, when asked yesterday to explain the strikers' grievances, said:

"First, we want all the employers to recognize the union; we want to unionize the shops; we are against the open shop."

"Secondly, we demand the abolition of the inside contract sweating system. What is that? A good many shops will assign to one worker several machines, and this worker, employs ignorant girls to run these machines for a wage as small as they can induce them to work for, and then sweat them for all they are worth. I doubt if, in case of accident, the proprietor of the shop could be held liable for damages to one of these inside sub-contract slaves. We demand that proprietors of all shops employ themselves the men and women who work in them."

"In the third place, we ask for a fifty-two-hour week. That will mean working from 8 to 6 every week day except Saturday, when we would have the girls get off at 4 o'clock. Girls who are on salary should be paid for the five yearly holidays they don't work."

"And then, in the dull seasons we ask that the foreman of each shop each night tell the workers how many hours of work he thinks they will have the following day; so that in case there is only a little work the girls can spend the hours they can't work attending to their own affairs, instead of hanging around in the shops. This is now done by the hat-trimmers, who won that arrangement after a long fight."

"Moreover, and finally, we ask that the work shall be so ordered that all those doing the same kind and grade in a shop shall receive the same pay. That is, that the fast workers shall from time to time through the week be allowed to come an hour or so later or leave an hour or so earlier, so that the slower girls can catch up. The hat-trimmers and some other unions enjoy that arrangement now."

Employers Must Sign Agreement.

Mrs. Weyl said that the employers were asked to sign an agreement embodying these provisions. The general agreement made no reference to more pay. That question was decided as between each employer and his workers, since the work was so varied that no general rule could sensibly be made about it. All those employers, however, who have taken back their striking shirt waist makers, she said, had given them substantial advances in pay.

I. B. Hyman, President of the Associated Waist and Dress Manufacturers, said of the proposed agreement of the strikers: "It is not more pay that we care so much about," he said. "We will settle that matter with the employes. We would agree to abolish the inside contract system, for there is little of that sort of thing in the factories of our members. In fact, we are pretty certain that the employers and their employes could agree if it were not for that union clause."

"The agreement provides that we must have union shops. We have agreed to have open shops. We don't care whether the workers are union or non-union. The agreement also provides that the scale of prices for work shall be decided upon by the workers, the employers, and the delegates in the shops. For instance, if I want to have a new kind of waist made I have to call in the delegate and talk over the price with him. If our salesman out on the road meets a man who tells him of a waist he wants to have, they must write to us and let us talk it over with the delegate before he can set a price on the garment."

"It is this union thing that is in the way of settlement."

But it is this union thing which the strikers most love just now. There are dozens of meetings a day to keep blazing the union spirit. Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, President of the Political Equality Association, and a lot of labor speakers will speak at an open-air meeting this afternoon in Rutgers Square, and to-morrow afternoon is the date for Mrs. Belmont's meeting in the Hippodrome.