

Lewis Attacks the Constitution

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE.

The chief obstacle to the destruction of the United Mine Workers' Union is the fighting spirit and fighting traditions of its rank and file.

One of these traditions was the clause placed in the constitution of the U. M. W. of A. by its founders way back in 1890 declaring that the union is organized to obtain for its members "the full social value of their product."

"Czar" Lewis and the administration machine on Wednesday attacked this famous section of the preamble of the union constitution, giving as their ground that "the bosses objected and called the union socialistic." And the machine substituted for "full social value of their product" the words "an equitable share of the fruits of their labor."

The preamble of a union constitution is only a symbol, but the clause just wrecked by Lewis was the symbol of a fighting class policy, the symbol of a real struggle against the coal barons, the symbol of an unflinching fight for the interests of

the men who toil in the mines, the symbol of the long battle for nationalization of the mines as a step toward their being worked for the use of the community and the welfare of the miners and not for private profit of the coal barons.

This move is in line with the general policy of the trade union bureaucracy, best expressed by Matthew Woll, of making the trade unions "respectable," making them satisfactory to the bosses, making them an aid to the bosses in increasing production, in speeding up, in increased profit at the expense of the workers. The Lewis-Woll plan means the conversion of the trade unions into agencies of the boss, the officials into foremen and straw bosses paid not by the boss but by the dues of the membership; it means the converting of our unions into company unions with the difference that they have officials not directly employed by the company, dues, per capita and meetings outside of the plant. These are, of course, important differences, but the tendency is clear just the same.

In trying to put these things

across, men like Woll and Lewis reckon without their rank and file. The mine workers with their fighting traditions will never let their union be turned into a tool of the coal barons.

Nor will the building trades workers, who are generally regarded as "conservative trade unionists, ever consent to their unions being turned into speed-up machines and their officials into foremen and straw bosses. The old trade union philosophy of not working so fast as to lead to exhaustion, the old plan to "make work" for other workers by not hogging it all yourself, was not very revolutionary, but is a far better working class policy than the speed-up policy and the please-the-boss policy of the Wolls and the Lewises. The rank and file of the trade unions have not yet had their final say to this new theory of their officialdom.

As far as the United Mine Workers are concerned, the miners only really begin to fight after the bosses think they are licked. And Lewis, agent for the coal barons, will yet find that out.