

THE STRIKE ITSELF IS NOW THE ISSUE

*"There is No Right to Strike Against the
Public Safety by Anybody, Anywhere, Anytime"*

When that was said to President Gompers of the American Federation of Labor by Calvin Coolidge thirty-four years ago, there was no law which expressly forbade a police strike in Boston, but the absolute and inescapable truth thus stated was immediately recognized and overwhelmingly approved by the people of the entire United States. It is just as indisputably true and just as inescapable today.

The strike against the electric service of 3,000,000 people, served by the Southern California Edison Company, had it accomplished the purpose intended by those who called it, would have been much **more destructive** to the public safety, health and welfare than a strike against the police service.

Fortunately, the loyalty to their duty of the great majority of Edison employees prevented the widespread public disaster which otherwise would have resulted from the strike caused by deluded and reckless union leaders.

The strike is a resort to industrial war. Where public safety is seriously involved as in an electric utility, it is in no sense a legitimate or rightful weapon. It is a conspiracy both to abandon vital posts of duty and to **prevent others from filling them**, which effort, if successful, would immediately set in motion a chain of disastrous consequences causing fatal accidents, enormous loss of property and eventual paralysis of the community life.

Like war, a strike sets free the emotions of hatred and the constant thought and threat of violence. Men and women on strike are victimized by their strike leaders into the delusion that it is they who are abused and the "winning of the strike" becomes almost a "holy cause." The picket-line becomes a "sacred" place which no one must violate. Reason is dethroned. Although many of them expect to complete their working life with their Company, during the strike they join in a common endeavor to destroy its good-will and capacity to serve.

To have used this ugly and dangerous weapon at all against the public safety is wholly wrong and indefensible; but to make impossible demands of the Edison Company management—demands which no informed person of normal judgment should have thought management had the power or right to meet—and then to pull a strike **against the public health, welfare and safety** in pursuit of those demands is to go far beyond the limits of right and even of decency.

We are now convinced from much evidence that Mr. Rapattoni, the man chiefly responsible for this strike, from the very first, was determined to have his way, including the im-

position of compulsory union membership, or to call this strike. In other words, during the long four months in which he subjected the Company's bargaining representatives to so much abuse, he was not in fact bargaining in good faith. This was, of course, strongly indicated by the fact that before even starting negotiations, he insisted upon and obtained from his members authority to call a strike under the representation that he needed it to use in "collective bargaining."

Then, impossible demands both for a wholly unreasonable wage increase, and for compulsory union membership, were made, and held to, during four months of bargaining (frequently stalled and delayed by Mr. Rapattoni), despite explanation that the Company management had no right, power or authority to meet those demands. Finally, Mr. Rapattoni made the meaningless gesture that he was willing to submit his demands to the consideration of a fact-finding committee. He knew, of course, that if the Company had no right to meet his wholly impossible demands that it could not empower anyone else to consider them with a view to their possible acceptance.

Again, therefore, we repeat: The Company management cannot give that which is not theirs to give. They cannot negotiate during this wrongful strike because collective bargaining cannot be conducted under coercion. And now that Mr. Rapattoni has so clearly shown how he uses and abuses such power as he has, no one should accept the responsibility of giving him more power.

The foregoing leads unavoidably to these conclusions and this policy:

The strike is now the **only issue**. Until it is abandoned, and picket lines withdrawn, there can be no negotiations by the Company with Local 47, I.B.E.W., A.F.L. The Company cannot negotiate during the strike free from some coercive influence of the strike, and hence without at least appearing to accept the strike as a legitimate device in "collective bargaining."

The negotiation or collective bargaining method of arriving at a contract with Local 47, I.B.E.W., A.F.L., was repudiated, and the contract terminated, by the Union's officers, and by their resort to this strike. The two methods—on the one hand peaceful negotiation, and on the other a strike against the public safety—are mutually exclusive and cannot be merged. By their choice of the second method, and so long as they pursue it, the Union leaders have made peaceful negotiations impossible.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY

