

The Office Employees Letter

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OFFICE WORKERS CONTRIBUTE TO DEFENSE FUND

At the regular February meeting the membership elected Brother August Terneak chairman of our Local Office Workers Civilian Defense Fund Campaign. This campaign of the Central Labor Union to raise \$70,000 or more for civilian defense is now in its third week and pledges have been received totaling more than \$94,000.

A number of unions have arranged for collections from their members. Your union is among this group. March 2 has been set as the deadline for turning in the collections. The committee hopes to have everything in by that date. Every penny collected will be used for purchase of equipment for civilian defense, such as blood banks, mobile kitchens, ambulances and medical supplies. No salaries are to be paid and no expenses are to be deducted for this campaign.

Our union has undertaken a very small part in this most worthy drive for funds. You can do your part. Make a voluntary contribution of at least \$1 to your shop steward or directly to Terneak, AFL Building, phone NA. 3870.

The Labor News Review over station WJSV each Saturday at 6:15 features the progress of this campaign. "Listen in."

After the public presentation has been made, each union contributing will be presented with a certificate showing its donation. Your support is urgently needed.



AUGUST TERNEAK

\$100 DEFENSE BOND PURCHASED

The membership authorized the purchase of a \$100 Defense Bond at the February meeting. The membership further instructed the Executive Committee to keep this matter of further purchases of Defense Bonds on its permanent agenda, and to make recommendations to the membership for further purchases.

Treasurer Esther Smith reports the purchase of this bond, February 12, 1942.

JACKPOT WILL PAY \$10 IN DEFENSE STAMPS

The name of Sister Nora B. Padway was drawn for the \$10 jackpot available at the February meeting, but as Sister Padway was not present at the meeting, the jackpot still stands at \$10 worth of defense stamps.

Come to the March meeting, and you may be the lucky member and swell your defense stamp holdings by another \$10 worth.

COST OF LIVING WAGE INCREASES

The American Federation of Labor blanket wage increase of five dollars a week to all its office workers, effective January 1, 1942, has been followed by similar increases for our membership employed in other union offices, including: International Association of Machinists, International Association of Fire Fighters, International Brotherhood of Bookbinders, and the Label Trades Department of the A. F. of L.

By the action in granting these increases these employers have shown their recognition of the increased living costs now being felt by all workers in the Nation's Capital, and have set an example for other employers to follow.

BOB REELECTED BUSINESS AGENT

Bob Probey was reelected for another year as business agent, with an increase of \$5 a week, at the last regular meeting. With his report of activities for the month of January he also gave a brief resume of his work during the past year. The report showed the gains in membership, and also listed the advantage in many of the agreements negotiated.

CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN WAR WORK

Sister Margaret Scattergood gave the following report at the February meeting:

More than a million women will come into war work in industries and offices this year, government experts estimate.

For office workers there will be some weird experiences. How will stenographers and typists fare, for instance, in a town of 300 which has suddenly had a huge powder plant built beside it, bringing 9,000 to work before houses can be built to accommodate them?

It was bad enough for the carpenters

**NEXT
REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, Mar. 3, 1942
8:00 P. M.
Chantilly Room
HAMILTON HOTEL**

A. F. of L. 100% FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE

THE OFFICE EMPLOYEES LETTER

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OFFICE EMPLOYEES UNION No. 11773

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208 National Union Building

Washington, D. C.

W. R. Probey.....Business Representative
NATIONAL 3870

PAUL R. HUTCHINGS.....President
W. R. PROBEY.....1st Vice President
AUGUST TERNEAK.....2nd Vice President
ERNEST H. HINKINS.....3rd Vice President
HELEN H. ELLIS.....Financial Secretary
IRENE BRUNGART.....Recording Secretary
ESTHER G. SMITH.....Treasurer

who had to sleep 6 in a room while they were building the plant, or drive 50 miles to work; who had to line up in a queue three blocks long if they wanted to attend the town's one movie show. For young girls who come to do office work at the new plant such conditions cannot be tolerated. Yet life is like that in some of the new munition factory towns.

The Women's Bureau Conference on Women in War Work, January 21-22, 1942, discussed such problems as these, faced by women entering war work. Representatives from 25 organizations with women members, attended the conference, including the YWCA, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the League of Women Voters, a number of trade unions, and other women's organizations.

The office workers met in a special committee to draw up their recommendations. The problem noted above, of proper living accommodations, was one of the first that impressed us, and we pointed out that suitable living and eating places, recreation and community life are vitally important for office workers in the new war production towns.

Problems of employment and wages were at the top of the list. The Employment Service must be ready to serve us, we insisted. It must help office workers find new jobs, for thousands are being laid off by plants closing out their advertising and billing activities, converting to war work. Training too must be provided; there will be new office machines and new work to learn in the war plants. We know that many training schools today give courses far from adequate for the young girl who wants to get a first class job. We recommended attention on making courses thorough and practical.

Salaries are often reduced in changing to new work. Many have already had that experience. This is a real problem for office workers, for how can salary standards be enforced? The trade union is the only possible agency to assure decent pay and work standards, we concluded, and

recommended the extension of union organization for office workers. State laws are a help with minimum wages but many states have not yet provided minimum wages for women or are behind in other protective laws. We urged strengthening of state laws, the maintenance of the 8-hour day for office workers, and the extension of minimum wage provisions.

Where women replace men in office work, we insisted that the "rate for the job" be the same for women as for men, both in fairness to the women and to prevent employers from trying permanently to take away men's jobs and give them to women, because women are "cheaper".

What is a good salary for office work? We had to admit that we didn't know what top rates are in many states. The Women's Bureau can help here by making studies and keeping them up-to-date. Such information will be invaluable for office workers' unions negotiating agreements with commercial firms. Here we had a good chance to provide for a long-felt need, for the office worker has always been the "forgotten man" (or girl) with the government information services.

What good will come of all this? Of course, there are no "teeth" in these provisions, no way to enforce them. But they have the endorsement of leading women's organizations. Wide distribution has been provided for the records of the conference, including those of committees on office workers and on women in industry. Our provisions have the endorsement of millions of organized women and will be used as standards on working and living conditions, training, employment service. We have urged that this committee meet again and continue its work.

Copies of the complete report on the conference as prepared by the Women's Bureau are being mailed to all A. F. of L. Office Worker Local Unions with this issue of the LETTER.

A. F. OF L. BUILDING HAS AIR RAID DRILL

The entire personnel of the American Federation of Labor offices, together with officers of international unions and their employes, participated in the first air-raid drill held in the A. F. of L. building Friday, February 20, at 2:30 P. M.

Sector Warden Charles Houck, Building Warden Cortland Zell, and Sector Warden James C. Gardiner reported that the drill was orderly and prompt. Within six minutes the entire building personnel and officers assembled on the third

and fourth floors. This, remarked Brother Gardiner, was excellent time, considering the fact that it was the first air-raid drill.

The ply-board window protections were erected by the building engineers, the halls on third and fourth floors lighted, the elevators cut out, stairways policed, and roof covered by service men. All employes working on the floors above the fourth were requested to proceed promptly to the fourth floor, and employes working below the third floor were asked to go to that floor.

The interruption to the usual busy day at A. F. of L. headquarters was entirely a surprise to the employes. In spite of this the employes conducted themselves as though they were veterans. All material, ledgers, balance sheets, reports, etc., were neatly put away. Wraps were put on and offices quickly vacated for the more secure halls. These employes were serious about their air-raid drill, and that is how it should be. They realize the significance attached to this preparedness.

The third floor hall was occupied by Mr. Meany, Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of Labor; Mr. Hushing, chairman of the legislative committee; Mr. Shishkin, of the research department; Mr. Prewitt, secretary-treasurer of the International Brotherhood of Bookbinders; Mr. Baer, president, and Mr. Richardson, secretary-treasurer of the International Association of Fire Fighters (who is a member of the Fire Defense Advisory Committee of the U. S. Office of Civilian Defense), besides the personnel of different A. F. of L. departments, and employes of some of the international unions whose offices are located in the building.

Director of Organization Fenton was caught in the middle of a conference, which was resumed in the fourth floor hall. Mr. Frey, of the Metal Trades Department, and Mr. Daugherty, president of the Letter Carriers Association, were among the group assembled on that floor.

Brother Gardiner advises that the A. F. of L. building will remain open during air raids, and he suggested that during raids office workers are invited to seek shelter at A. F. of L. headquarters.

We are happy to report that neither the first aid chairman nor her committee were needed. However, the committee was active and sympathetic to those who were a bit disturbed at being locked out of their offices after the drill.

The wardens wish to impress upon us that we be prompt and considerate for others during these drills.