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TO : Department of State

837.06/9-1250

FROM : HABANA 579 September 12, 1950

REF :

SUBJECT : LABOR NOTES--HABANA, August 1 to September 10, 1950

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ELECTRICAL WORKERS

The Fourth Congress of the National Federation of Electric, Gas and Water Plant Workers was held in Habana September 1-5, 1950. Angel COFIÑO, Secretary General of the Federation, presided over the various meetings. President PRIO, José MORELL Romero, Minister of Labor, and other high government officials attended the inaugural session of the Congress. President Prio spoke briefly to the assembled delegates and congratulated them on their recent decision to expel all known Communists from the union and to request the employers to dismiss them from their jobs. He appealed to the workers to make every effort to reach an understanding with the leaders of the CTC (Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba) and thus move toward the eventual uniting of all Cuban labor. (Habana's 540, September 7, 1950.)

Angel Cofiño in his opening address to the workers recounted the gains which had been made by the workers under his direction and assured them that future labor contracts would be even more advantageous to them than the present contract. He also urged the delegates to encourage all members of the Federation to work toward the unification of Cuban labor. Notably absent from Cofiño's speech were the usual attacks on Eusebio MUJAL and the CTC in general.

The following proposals were presented at the final plenary session and were unanimously approved:

To approve and inaugurate a plan for the construction of low-cost housing which would be available to all members of the Federation.

To sever all connections and relations with the Latin American Federation of Workers (CTAL) and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) since they are presently dominated by Communists.

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VJ

To organize a school for the training of labor leaders.

To expel all Communists from the Federation and assist the company in eliminating them from their jobs.

To approve the closure of the Communist newspaper Hey.

To approve the plan to unify Cuban labor and to assist the CTC in achieving that unity.

RUBBER WORKERS

The strike which has paralyzed activities in the factories of the three largest Cuban manufacturers of rubber goods products since August 21 appears to be well on the way to a final settlement with agreement on wage increases having been reached in two of the three plants affected by the strike movement.

Management of United States Rubber Company reached an agreement with the union leaders which provides for a four cent per hour increase for all factory workers and increases for office employees ranging from twelve to fourteen percent. Other gains realized by the workers include creation of a loan bank, improved factory ventilation, extension of the present labor contract to February 1952, and withdrawal of illegal strike charges against the instigators of the strike.

The labor union at the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company agreed to accept an eight percent wage increase in place of its original demand for a general increase of forty percent.

Employees at the United States Rubber Company's plant returned to work on September 5 and the Goodyear employees resumed work on the following day. Workers at the Goodrich Tire Plant are still on strike and no immediate solution to the labor dispute is in sight.

RETIREMENT FUNDS

Labor leaders in various industries whose employees are not participating in any retirement fund at the present time met recently to discuss the problem, and resolved to take definite steps to persuade Congress to take action on legislation which in some cases has been pending for several years. At the present time there are bills pending which would provide retirement benefits to workers in the following industries: shoe manufacturers, caterers, medical workers (non-professional), construction workers, metal workers, wood workers, motion picture theater employees, and air transport workers.

The labor leaders agreed on the following plan of action: 1) to request Eusebio Mujal, Secretary General of the CTC, to accompany them on a visit to President Priu for the purpose of asking him to include in his message to Congress, which is scheduled to be delivered on September 18, a request that early action be taken on the proposed bills providing for retirement benefits for workers in the above-mentioned industries; 2) to call on the President of the Senate and the President of the House of Representatives to solicit their cooperation in placing the bills before Congress at an early date; 3) to organize a mass demonstration of the workers at the Capitol on the opening day of Congress and demand immediate action by that body; and 4) in the event Congress does not act on the bills immediately after convening, a general strike will be called and all industrial and economic activity in Cuba will be paralyzed.

It is doubtful that a general strike will be called since no labor group has successfully effected a general strike since 1933 and the present issue, although important to a fairly large number of workers, is not believed to be of sufficient importance to the majority to gain their support in a general work stoppage. It is possible, however, that the pressure being put on Congress by this group of workers may result in the creation of one general retirement fund in place of the present system of a separate fund for each industry.

MEDICAL WORKERS (Non-professional)

The Seventh National Council Meeting of the National Federation of Medical Workers was held in Camaguey August 14-16, 1950. According to available information delegates from thirty-one of the thirty-four member syndicates were in attendance. Among the proposals adopted at the final plenary session were the following: 1) that the Executive Board of the Federation should assume direct responsibility for the propaganda in favor of a retirement fund (see above); 2) to suspend the union rights of, and expel from the syndicates, all known Communists; 3) to establish a check-off system for the payment of union dues; 4) to organize a campaign against black market activities and speculation in essential items; 5) demand that the Government outlaw the Communist Party and return the newspaper Hoy to the workers of the CTC; 6) to hold the next National Congress of the medical workers in Habana in April 1951.

TEXTILE WORKERS

The Cuban Cabinet agreed on August 31 to extend the payment of subsidies to unemployed textile workers for an additional sixty days.

CRUSELLAS Y CIA.

A threatened strike in the soap factory operated by Crusellas y Cia. was averted late in August when the management agreed to grant a ten percent wage increase. Negotiations had been in progress since early June when the employees demanded an increase similar to that received by employees at Sabates, S. A. (Habana's 1304, June 8, 1950). Management initially refused to meet the workers demands and only after the workers appealed to the Ministry of Labor would the company discuss the question. Reportedly, the Ministry of Labor issued a decision in favor of the workers purely on the grounds that Sabates, S. A., had increased the wages of its employees by ten percent and, therefore, Crusellas should be obliged to offer its employees a similar increase. Apparently the question of "costeabilidad" (ability to pay) was never considered in either case.

BANK WORKERS

At a recent meeting of the Executive Board of the Habana Bank Workers Federation it was resolved to request the National Minimum Wage Commission to approve a minimum wage of \$130.00 per month for all bank workers. The request is being made at the present time as several labor contracts are due to expire during the next few months and the Federation hopes to obtain the approval of the Minimum Wage Commission before negotiating new contracts for the workers.

For the Chargé d'Affaires ad interim:


Ray H. Crane,
Assistant Attaché.

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