

Sigman's New Plan to Save Dressmakers

By ROSE WORTIS.

A few months ago the "Forward" and the "Justice" began a widespread publicity campaign about Sigman's new plan to save the cloak industry. Discussions went on in the employers' circles and in "Women's Wear." Sigman gave numerous interviews. The entire right wing press was full of hints and comments as to the importance of this new plan that was to be proposed by Sigman at a General Executive Board meeting. A general atmosphere of expectancy was created in the entire market and everyone awaited the announcement as to what might be the new panacea to save the cloak industry.

The plan was not revealed at the board meeting, but after months of idle speculation we finally learn the profound nature of it. He solemnly decreed that all contracting shops be banished from the industry and that large shops be organized in their place, and the way to accomplish this was simply to convince the employers of the advantages to be derived both by the workers and the employers, by adopting Sigman's program (Alas, the employers turned a deaf ear to his convincing arguments.)

The dress problem is today approached in much the same manner as Sigman's previous plan to save the cloakmakers. Tho it is already a few months since a discussion has been started about strikes, stoppages and walkouts in the dress industry the month of January has almost passed but we are still in the dark as to Sigman's plans.

Planned to Liquidate.

As far back as last October Sigman began to confer with the dress contractors. It is a known fact now that the subject under discussion at these conferences was the imminent dissolution of the Dress Contractors' Association which had in reality ceased to function and had become an organization in name only, as frankly admitted by its officers.

The Sigman clique could

public announcement of the dissolution of the Dress Contractors' Association, following close on the heels of the liquidation of the Jobbers' Association, particularly at a time when it was proclaiming to the entire world that Sigman had the situation well in hand.

It was therefore decided at that conference that during the dull season the International would subsidize the association, and a promise was made that at the beginning of the new season radical steps would be taken to improve the situation. One of the proposals made, was to call a general strike in the dress industry, a proposal which Sigman knew could not be carried out because the basic requirements for a successful strike in any industry is a leadership which has the confidence of the workers, which exercises control over them and can mobilize them for the struggle; a situation which does not exist in Sigman's union.

The Dress Industry Today.

The dress industry, which at the beginning of the present struggle had barely recovered from the destructive effects of the civil war forced on the union by Sigman in 1925, was hard hit by his new expulsion crusade which came but a few weeks before the expiration of the agreement in the dress industry. The dress contractors, in their greed for profits, grasped the opportunity to press greater concessions from the union and lined up in full support of the Sigman machine, which concluded an agreement with them behind the backs of the dressmakers.

It is an undisputed fact even in the ranks of the Sigman clique that the overwhelming majority of the dressmakers supported the left administration and only thru the most drastic and ruthless methods was it possible for Sigman with the aid of the jobbers and contractors to terrorize a portion of the workers into registering with his union. For a period of thirteen months the dressmakers have offered the most stubborn

resistance to Sigman's hired gangs. The most desperate and spectacular struggles during the past year occurred in front of the dress shops. Every inch of ground was defended in a most heroic manner.

Faced Starvation.

Hundreds of workers were thrown out of the shops, choosing starvation rather than submission to the Sigman machine. The best union shops were destroyed in the course of Sigman's registration campaigns. The open shop spread thruout every nook and cranny of the trade without any check. Wages are now reduced to the lowest level, working hours are unlimited and unemployment is rampant. Misery and starvation have become the lot of the great mass of the dressmakers.

The jobbers, who had extended open arms to Sigman at the outbreak of the struggle, concluding an agreement with the International, have used the Sigman machine as a tool to further their ends in destroying the union and shaking off whatever responsibility they carried for the working conditions in the industry. Having accomplished their aim, they no longer saw any further need for continuing their relations with Sigman's union and thereupon completely liquidated their association.

Contractors' Officials Hit.

The agreement concluded by the Contractors' Association with the Sigman machine, which had no control over the membership, soon began to show disastrous results not only for the workers but for the contractors as well. The chaos wrought by Sigman's pogrom, his failure to enforce the agreement with the jobbers, the unhampered growth of the open shop, the failure and inability to carry on organizational work, did away with the necessity for contractors to seek protection against the union by joining an association, with the result that the Contractors' Association with a membership of close to eight hundred firms has now been reduced to an insignificant number, and is

chiefly comprised of officers, most of whom are themselves beginning to realize the futility of maintaining an organization in name only.

The bitter hatred of the dressmakers toward the clique, which had accumulated in the course of many years of persecution and expulsion, has now reached a point of desperation where the workers are ready to risk all in their determination to wipe out the Sigman machine, and any plan undertaken by Sigman under the prevailing conditions is doomed to failure at its very inception.

For a Catch Phrase.

The Sigman clique, in spite of its boasts of having subdued the dressmakers, is well aware of the desperate condition in which it finds itself. Hence so much time is devoted in the discussion of various mysterious plans which they are reluctant to make public. The big chief Hochman and his new assistant Reisberg have called together joint meetings of their so-called executive boards from the various locals. Sigman and the other chiefs also attended these meetings and jabbered about strikes, stoppages and organization drives. Some declared all these schemes to be old fashioned. Hochman has set his whole staff industriously exploring dictionaries in an effort to discover some new catch-phrase "that would stir the imagination of the dressmakers" as he expressed it.

Once more the machinery has been set in motion to arouse the curiosity of the workers as to what exactly the Sigman-Hochman combination, whose "throne" is beginning to shake, are planning for the dressmakers. The same veil of mystery, behind which Sigman's plan to save the cloak industry was shrouded, has now been transferred to the dress industry. All this hesitancy on the part of the clique to come forth with any proposals is an indication of the hopeless situation in which they find themselves today. Sigman's new plan to save the dressmakers will in all probability follow its predecessor (the large shop plan) to oblivion.