

# THE Pavement Trail



A COLLECTION OF POETRY  
& PROSE FROM THE ALLIS-  
CHALMERS PICKET LINES.

ILLUSTRATED BY ..

• GIDEON SANDELIN

WITH A FOREWORD BY ..

• MERIDEL LE SUEUR  
AUTHOR OF ..

“NORTH STAR COUNTRY”

# FOREWORD —

## "LET THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE BE HEARD"

Poetry has always been the hammer and the anvil of the American frontier. The democratic man, from the beginning of our country, looked upon himself as a prime maker, a man who walked straight into the sun, fought for the four freedoms, or more if he wanted to name them, who could invent, out of his tall sky piece, strange new tools and machines, and new ways of man working and fighting together.

Poetry was always the heat that tempered the steel. It was always part of the making of our nations, of the struggle to get and keep "inalienable rights," to organize democracy against organized repression, to write for the papers, print one's own poetry, like this book, to recite it on the road, the picket line, at camp meeting in the town hall or union hall, at picnics, Grange, co-operative or union meetings.

The voice of the people is not always so all-fired elegant, and sometimes they haven't the time to polish it up — picket duty comes early, lasts long; it is cold in winter, hot in summer. But the poetry of the people is full of muscle, straight from the forge, hot off the griddle.

It may be the long-walking, lonesome poetry of Abe Lincoln or the hefty naming of everything like Walt Whitman, or the songs without name handed down from the marching line, from the guy who rises at the meeting and makes a good speech, or the labor hero. Whatever it is, we speak our piece and are proud that we are the workers of the world, that when we drop the tools not a wheel will turn, not a thing will be made.

We can talk high or tragical or comical and make fresh plans and green arguments and speak of practical know-how and derring-do as well as the high fantasy of the tall tale and the Allis-Chalmers

# DEDICATED. . . .

To the thousands of American workers who walked and are walking picket lines so that the people of this country may have a better life.

To the men and women - young and old, Negro and white, veteran and non-veteran - who held out despite the pinch of hunger and the pressure of persecution from hostile sources to win contracts and save their unions from destruction.

To a continued unity among all laboring people - workers in the shops, on the railroads, ships, farms and offices - as a bulwark against the growing menace of fascism and another world war.

Price: Thirty-Five Cents

Proceeds to go to the Fund to Aid Allis-Chalmers Strikers in seven plants located at Boston, Mass., Pittsburgh, Pa., Norwood, Ohio, La Porte, Ind., Springfield, Ill., La Crosse, Wis., and West Allis, Wis.

Local 42  
uopwa-cio

heard!" When the voice of the people is heard then democracy is alive in the world.

In a book such as this, the breach between life and poetry closes. I give you here a piece of labor's international poetry which augurs a new forge of power of the workers of the world; "These are objectives which we, as workers, share with all freedom-loving peoples: speedy and uncompromising victory over our enemies; enduring peace; eradication of fascism in all its forms; international collaboration in the economic sphere which will utilize the rich resources of the world for the benefit of its people; yielding employment with rising standards of living and real security to the men and women of all nations; a democratic society which will assure political and civil equality and full cultural opportunity for the people of the earth." This is from the Report of the World Trade Union Conference held in London in February 1945, and in its way is the greatest poetry.

This book speaks for the front line held by the Allis-Chalmers workers for us all. It is the voice of organized labor, now the full voice of democracy.

"Do you see, O my brothers and sisters?  
It is not chaos or death - it is form,  
union, plan - it is eternal life - it  
is happiness."

This is why we write.  
This is why we fight.

MERIDEL LE SUEUR

June 1946

epic of the rabbit that crossed the picket line!

Yes, the history of the American poet from the enduring ones who came over bondaged in the Mayflower to the hardy Allis-Chalmers workers, is full of vinegar and brag and fight and struggle. In the days of the American revolution, the songs were sung on the frozen fields of Valley Forge, and a man in rags named Tom Paine cheered the men up by writing some pretty good poetry on a drum-head by a campfire. That was one of the biggest strikes in history!

Then there was the long period of our nation being born which is very much like a Union being born. Then the long struggle still going on between the backward looking feudal land and slave owners, the old repressive feudalists - still alive in the South and some places in the North! And there are the songs and poetry of freedom made up in the night, sung in the day to give courage.

If you look in the newspapers and books of the organizations, political and economic, of the garment workers, typesetters, carpenters, railroad, miners - you will find much poetry. In the mining camps there is the wonderful tradition of the bards or minstrel singers. This poet writes the history of the mine, the struggles, disasters, and of company sinks, stooges and bosses. There is coal dust on the fiddle but it plays mighty sweet music. The garment workers who worked from "can see to can't see" in sweat shops had their poets in many languages.

There is a poet close to the heart of the workers of Allis-Chalmers, a man who was a martyr to the first strike for the eight hour day against the McCormicks of Chicago back in 1887, who when they put the black cap over his head said: "O, men of America, let the voice of the people be

## THE HARDEST JOB

Oh, a lot of help is needed  
In the winning of a strike;  
For there's much to do each  
Minute of the day!  
And sometimes folks are called  
Upon to do what they dislike  
To bring about a victory  
Of rights with higher pay!

You may be asked to seek donations  
Or to drive your car around;  
Or to cook down in our kitchen  
For our men.  
You'll work harder than your daily  
Job, on unfamiliar ground—  
And put in longer hours for us  
Time and time again!

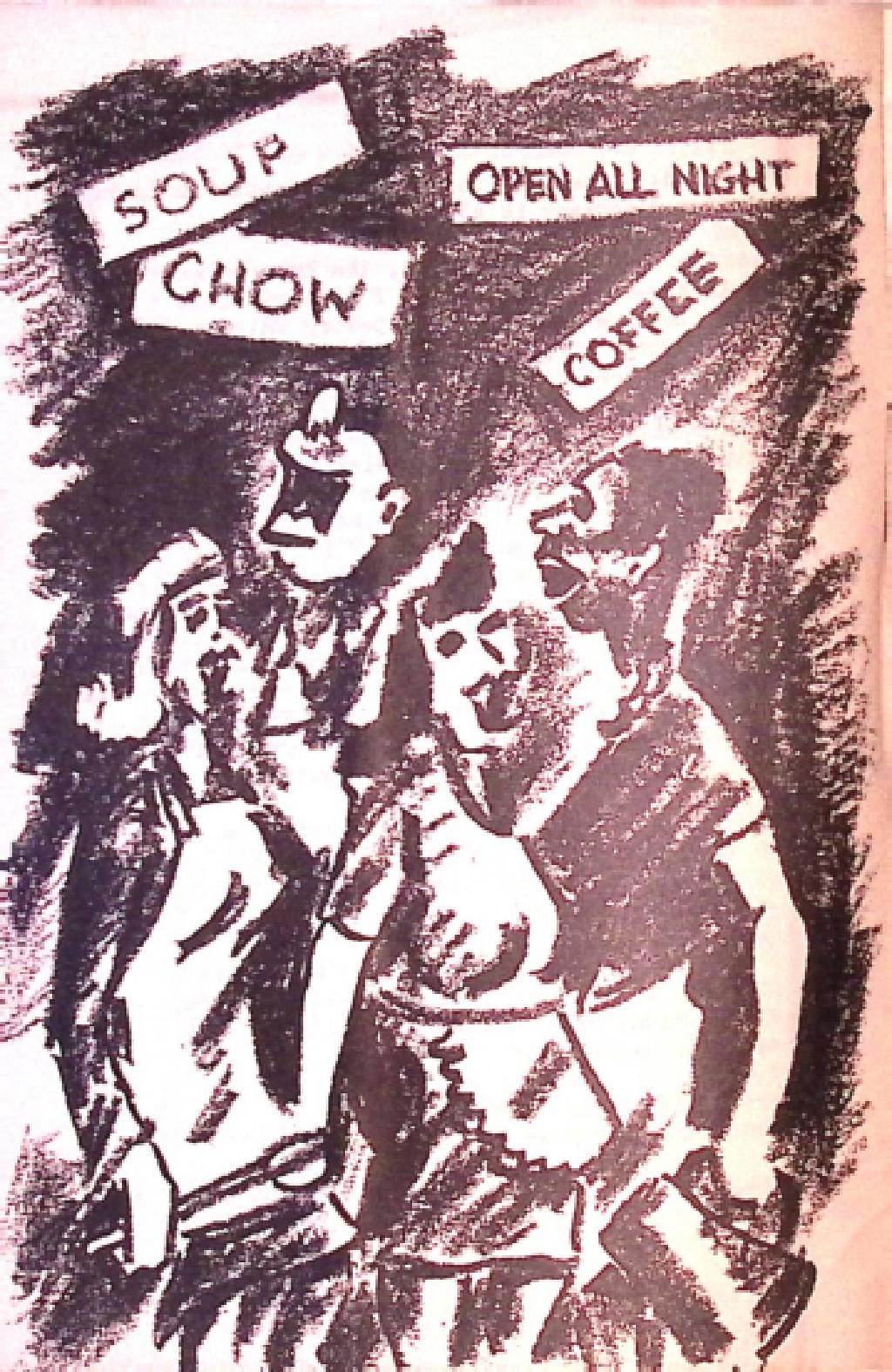
But of any job you'll handle,  
Tho they may seem long and tough  
You can hold your head the highest  
If you heed the picket's call!  
Don't let anybody kid you,  
Cause you'll find out soon enough  
That marching on that picket line's  
The hardest job of all!

## WHEN YOU WIN

Will you know you did your duty  
While the rest were doing theirs?  
Will respect repay your efforts  
And a contract ease your cares?

Will your rights be more protected  
And your job be waiting still  
And much higher wages meet you  
When you win? You bet they will!

Yes! You're striking for a purpose  
And you'll prosper when you win.  
So pitch in and do your duty  
And watch better times begin!



SOUP  
CHOW

OPEN ALL NIGHT

COFFEE



## SEND THEM PAC-king

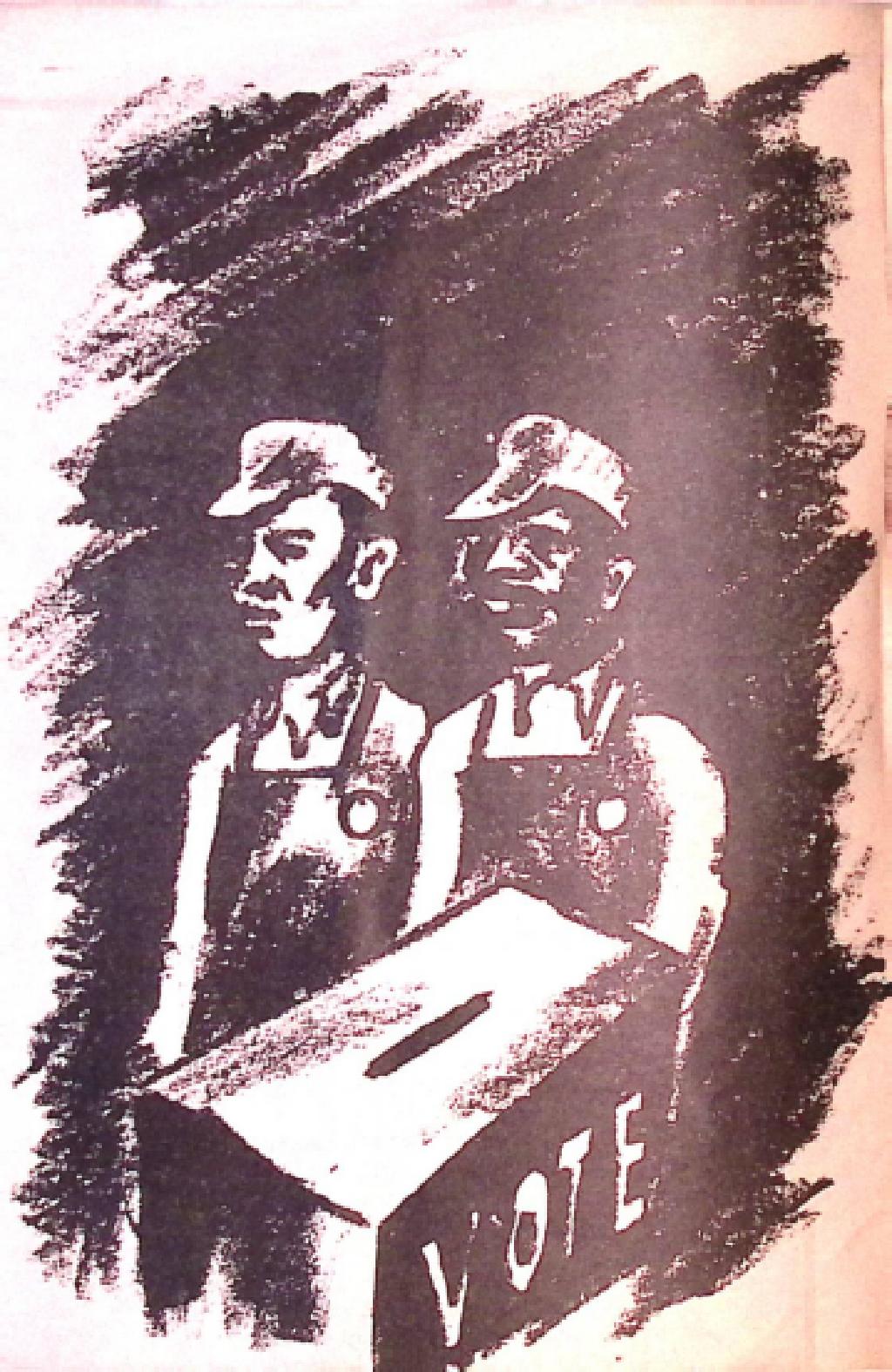
You've got to clean house,  
Spray Flit on the louse  
Who on election promises failed.  
We've got in mind  
Several horses' behind  
Who ought to be shackled and flailed.

They're up there in scores--  
Those political whores--  
But, mind you, they're legally elected!  
Your job right away  
Is to stand up and say,  
"Next time we'll see they're ejected!"

For these guys are leeches  
And eat political peaches  
While at you they spit out the stone.  
To the big boys he'll sell out  
While you will have hell out  
At your job, and city and home.

So when prices go skyup,  
And taxes go highup--  
And they're wearing you down to the cob--  
At election next time  
Kick out these swine;  
Elect a Union man to the job.

For suffer you will  
As they pass through each bill  
Designed to keep Labor in chains.  
Elect labor parties  
Who'll crack down these smarties  
Or these leeches will smear labor's gains.



VOTE

## THE TRAGIC TREE

I think that I shall never see  
A poem tragic as a tree,  
An old Oak tree, tough and hard  
Inside the Allis-Chalmers yard.  
With uplifted branches it would pray  
"Oh, take me out of here some day.  
The birds won't nest among my leaves.  
All they do is taunt and tease.  
A squirrel around me once did hop,  
But has moved to the yard of a Union shop.  
Some days the pigeons fly o'er me,  
And drop their loads with accuracy.  
It's getting so the wind each day  
With contempt will stay away.  
If an axe some day my trunk should snap  
I hope it's wielded by a Union chap."

## THE PAVEMENT TRAIL

(Tune: "As the Caissons Go Rolling Along")

Grunt and groan  
Moan and wail  
As they hit the pavement trail,  
But the pickets go marching along.

Round and round  
In the line,  
Tired, feeling far from fine  
But the pickets go marching along.

Oh, the shop's closed tight,  
But we'll fight with all our might  
The big boys who hate our guts, and so  
My shoes are thin - but my spirit's  
mighty strong—  
As the pickets go marching along.



## ODE TO BUCK STORY

Buck's pictures lately  
So royal and stately  
Have enhanced our newspaper pages.  
No use denying  
Old Buck keeps trying  
To look like the King of the Sages.

Buck's quite a guy  
But there's more meets the eye  
In sizing up this venerable gent.  
He's tried since the beginning  
To give the Unions a skinning;  
He's after organized labor hell bent.

Buck's toothy grin  
Is misleading as sin;  
He wants the Union forever dissolved.  
Don't let him succeed  
'Cause brother you'll bleed  
All, or nothing at all, he's resolved.

His platinum locks  
And loud-colored socks  
Could easily put you off guard.  
But brother, don't turn  
Or your tail-end he'll burn;  
He wants Unionism feathered and tarred.

He's a right smart dresser  
And at tricks a good guesser  
To the public he appears ready and willing.  
Old Buck would be good  
Were he in Hollywood  
As a villain he'd get a number one billing.

## BUILD YOUR UNION

(Sung to the tune: "On Wisconsin")

Build your Union, build your Union  
Stronger every day  
All the bosses will take losses  
If you never sway.

Slavery's ended, Abe contended  
History books all quote  
Fight-brother-fight, fight, fight  
Your in this boat!

Back your Union, back your Union  
Fight ill-gotten gain.  
The boys on top will surely flop  
When you see through their game.  
They'll try to gyp, but here's a tip  
On how to make them squirm  
Fight-pickets-fight, fight, fight  
Be just but firm!

Back your Union, back your Union  
Build a human chain.  
That's the ticket, while you picket  
Show them who's to blame.  
Never falter, shake that halter  
Stand up like a man.  
Fight-members-fight, fight, fight  
Give all you can!

On Wisconsin, on Wisconsin  
With the CIO.  
Clean the slate, and make the state  
All union where you go.  
It's a fight, but labor's might  
Will triumph in the end.  
Fight-brother-fight, fight, fight  
The twig will bend!

### I SAW A GOAT

I saw a Goat the other day  
And he ambled up to say:  
"Listen, sir, your eyes I'll blurr  
If you cast at me another slurr.  
Though I'm low in God's creation  
Me and Geist ain't no relation -  
Me and Wally ain't no ilk -  
At least, by God, I give out milk!  
That's more than I can say for him  
What he dishes out is awful thin!"

### PITY THE POOR COMPANY!

They were faced with seizure  
And had tasted our might;  
They were "moved" to waive  
Their fundamental right—  
So the Company was saved,  
Praise the Lord!  
By the Wisconsin Employment Relations Board.  
And the headline read the other day,  
As on the sidewalk the paper lay,  
"ALLIS OFFICER ENTERS TALK!"  
Hell! That's no news—  
It took six weeks to take that walk!



## A MOLDER'S LIFE

A molder has no brains at all  
To work like hell - to hit the wall.  
He works and works like a crazy man  
At night he is not worth a damn.

His sand is wet; the iron won't flow  
And most of his castings they will blow.  
The sand is dry; the casting cuts -  
That's enough to make a molder nuts.

He roots and roots and sets up a big floor.  
Next day he can't work - his back is so sore.  
The molding trade is an awful life  
At night he's so tired, he can't please his wife.

Mr. Root M. Up works for Mr. Burke,  
He always growls and wants more work.  
He rams 'em up and sets 'em down.  
They say he's the biggest fool in town.

\* \* \*

The day worker works with sense and ease;  
While the stove plater works by the piece.  
The jobs are bad - they are getting worse -  
Soon he will take his last ride in a hearse.

And when he's dead and in his grave  
And all his bones a'rottin',  
There will still be plenty of molders  
to take his place  
When he is quite forgotten.

MATT

### PICKET'S PRAYER

God, how tired I am tonight!  
My feet are weary;  
My head is light.  
My heart is empty;  
My belly's tight.  
Yet deep inside me,  
My conscience cries,  
"Do not weaken!  
Keep up the fight!"

And so to sleep I lay me down  
With a prayer for Wally, Van, and Brown.  
May the Lord in some miraculous way  
Make those genta see the light of day.  
And sign a contract to end this strife.  
To let us lead a decent life!

### ANSWER

I prayed for Wally the other night  
In the hope that he could see the light  
'Twas a helluva answer we got b'gory  
Instead of light they gave us Buck Story.

So now to sleep I lay me down  
No prayers for Wally, Van or Brown.  
What th' hell! It ain't no use  
I'mbettin' my dough  
On Robert Buse!

OH, TO BE A RABBIT, SIGH FOREMEN,

AS BRER SLIDES UNDER THE GATE

Did the rabbit show its button, or didn't it? That seems to be the question that has been worrying the press since Brer crossed the picket line at Gate 8 Wednesday morning, tore through the gate and went into the plant.

If Brer got through without showing his badge, then this must mean a CHANGE in Union policy. Does it mean that the Union is letting foremen through without badges, now, Bud - what's the low down?

Where you been lately? Don't you know, it's a question of IDENTIFICATION, not just badges. A rabbit is a rabbit, and there's no mistakin' a rabbit for a rat. But how can a fellow tell a foreman from a scab if he doesn't show his button?

Of course, there was the wise guy who said maybe the company was pullin' an Allis-in-Wonderland and turning foremen into rabbits so they could get into the plant. After all, there's nothing can multiply like a rabbit!

Jeepers, that's a thought! If you see another rabbit, you'd better stop it and ask to see its button. This is the mating season, ain't it?



## MARCHING ONWARD TO VICTORY

(Sung to the tune of: "Marching Through Georgia")

Join the A-C picket line  
And help the cause along.  
Sing a song of Union strength  
And sing it all day long.  
Sing it early; sing it late  
Many thousand strong,  
Marching onward to victory!

## Chorus:

Hurrah! Hurrah! Come join our picket line.  
Hurrah! Hurrah! Make A-C come to time  
While we sing our Union songs  
To keep the blues away,  
Marching onward to victory!

Bring your sweethearts and your wives  
And bring the "kiddies" too.  
Mothers, sisters, brothers, friends—  
It is your struggle too!  
Side by side we'll march along  
Many thousand strong  
Marching onward to victory!

## Repeat Chorus.

When the struggle's over boys  
And the vict'ry won,  
You can rest your weary limbs  
For a job well done.  
Now we need you on the line  
Many thousands strong  
Marching onward to victory!

## Repeat Chorus.



NO CONTACT  
NO WORRY

SAVE  
THE  
OPA

OLE SWEPEER SAYS:

PAYROLL BUSINESS SMELLS FISHY!

Howdy, Folks!

U no folks that shore is a mitey fine bunch of workers on thair picket line, and they shore put in a lot uv time. So iffn ya no ennyone whut aint on the picket line doin his share, git over to their house and tell them to rustle thair bones over to our picket lines. That would make it easier for all uv us.

I wuz talking ter a leetul gal out in frunt of ther main office the other day and she said she works in the payroll department and they had all their checks reddy last Wensday, May 1st, to be mailed out, but the company wuz halden them up.

How do you like them potaters? Wassabig idea, Mr. Geist? Ya shore got a lot of explainin to do! Ya can't say the pickets held the checks up, cuz YOU are the one delayin them. Ya figger this will cause the workers a lot of greef—and in a way yore right—but greef always tuffens people—and we'll have just that much more to settle with ya! Delayin our checks may hurt us, but it shore as Hell won't lick us!

And annudder thing, Walter. Quit tryin ter use the Wisconsin State Labor Board as yer stooges. They're sposed ter be dere ter help the workers, and not as NAMzie stooges—an if dey don't remember dat, one of dese days we will vote us a new State Labor Board—one that will consentrait on the Labor part of da title!



## WE'LL BEAT THEM ON THE PICKET LINE

Tune: "Solidarity Forever"

We workers at Allis-Chalmers  
We have Local 2-4-8.  
It's an Auto Workers Union  
The strongest in the state.  
It's hitting on all cylinders  
It's timing's never late--  
With the power of the CIO!

Chorus: Solidarity Forever

We beat the fascists overseas;  
We'll beat them here at home.  
They've tried to wreck our union,  
But it's built on solid stone.  
Story, Geist and all the rest  
Had better take a hint--  
'Cause it just can't be done!

Chorus: Solidarity Forever

We'll beat them on the picket line;  
We'll beat them in the street.  
There's nothing that can stop us  
Or cause us to retreat.  
They have to sign the contract,  
Sign on the dotted line--  
And then their plants will run.

Chorus: Solidarity Forever

### ACTION MEMO

WHAT GOOD IS HIGHER PAY  
IF WE LOSE THE O.P.A.  
HELP THE NATION  
STOP INFLATION  
WRITE YOUR SENATOR TODAY!



THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

There's a hush in the place,  
And a flush on each face—  
The directors are meeting today!  
They'll arrive at the plant  
To vex and enchant  
All the boys who draw Big Bosses' pay!

The big room is waiting  
For talks and debating  
On policies the board will lay down!  
The spittoons are glistening  
And all ears are listening  
From Wallie, to straw bosses down.

The gavel will crack  
As the board settles back  
In their chairs for emergency meeting.  
They'll burn long cigars  
And talk about cars  
And their golf feats oft-times repeating.

Geist and Van Cleaf  
Will shake like a leaf  
Perspiration their suaveness will breakup.  
They'll do anything—  
Jump, dance, shout, or sing—  
To keep the board's mind off a shakeup.

They'll say, By Damn!  
That each telegram  
To Goodland and Hanley was beautiful!  
And how Smajkal and Worley  
Bucked the picket lines early—  
How, in fact, the whole gang was so dutiful.

But the chairman, with gall  
Will say, "On the ball!"  
And shake a big, palsied finger!  
"You'd better improve  
And get in the groove  
If around here much longer you'd linger!"



# ABOUT THIS BOOK . . .

THE PAVEMENT TRAIL contains a selection of the best original writings appearing in THE DAILY PICKET, bulletin published five times weekly for the Allis-Chalmers strikers at the West Allis, Wisconsin, plant.

Although initiated by Local 248, UAW-CIO, this project was undertaken in behalf of all Local Unions at the seven Allis-Chalmers plants on strike. These include: Local 119, UFMWA-CIO, La Porte, Indiana; Local 120, UFMWA-CIO, Springfield, Illinois; Local 765, UERMWA-CIO, Norwood, Ohio; Local 613, UERMWA-CIO, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Local 239, UERMWA-CIO, Boston, Massachusetts; CIO Local Industrial Union, 1424, La Crosse, Wisconsin; and Local 248, UAW-CIO, West Allis, Wisconsin.

The publisher is indebted to all those who helped make this booklet possible: the pickets whose many original writings suggested its publication; Mrs. Meridel Le Sueur, author, who took time from her busy writing schedule to write the Foreword; Gideon Sandelin, artist, whose drawings illustrate this work, and who has just returned to union ranks, where he had long been active, after four years in the armed forces; and Dorothy Weber, typist.

# A PUBLICATION OF . . .

LOCAL 248, UNITED AUTOMOBILE WORKERS OF AMERICA, CIO  
8111 West Greenfield Avenue, West Allis, Wisconsin

Robert Buse, President; Joseph Dombek, Vice President; Fred McStroul, Recording Secretary; Alfred Ladwig, Financial Secretary; Linus Lindberg, Treasurer; William Ostovich, Chairman, Education Committee

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Esther Handler, Education Director and Editor

### JUST HAVE FAITH

If two and two are four, boys,  
And three and three are six,  
Isn't it just as simple  
To see through Wally's tricks?

If we all stick together  
And push with all our might;  
Why, can't you see how quickly  
You'll win this contract fight?

Gosh! Those who aren't in Unions  
Can realize the truth!  
It's clear to older people  
And it's understood by youth!

When it's plain to see the power  
And the hitting strength of strikes  
It's hard to see why stubbornness  
Is one of Wally's likes!

We realize dividing tricks  
And calling names; he tries.  
He'll learn determination tho  
From our own picket guys!

We'll outlast all his tactics  
And come out stronger yet  
And if Geist doubts our promise--  
Come on, we'll make a bet!

When daily headlines sicken  
And troubles seem to spin,  
Don't ever lose your faith, boys--  
YOU KNOW WE'RE GOING TO WIN!

