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Kohler

**"All my life my Daddy's
been on Strike
to make my
future better"**

the
KOHLER WORKER'S
Story ➔

*To All Members
of the United Association:*

Having been President of the Milwaukee Building and Construction Trades Council for many years and a lifetime resident and citizen of the State of Wisconsin, I am personally acquainted with the facts and the history of the first Kohler Strike in 1934. In fact, I was one of a Committee of Four that negotiated a settlement with the Kohler Company after the strike had been in existence for seven years. With this personal background and knowledge of the facts of the first Kohler Strike, I am now requesting all members of the United Association to read the Kohler Workers Story as set out in this booklet.

The Kohler Workers are striking for a just and righteous cause. You as an individual can help the Kohler Workers by requesting Master Plumbers, your Employers, your friends, and the purchasing public at large, and other trade union members in your locality *Not to Purchase Kohler Plumbing Wares and Equipment.*

I caution you, however, that during the course of your employment you must handle and install all Kohler products. If you should refuse to handle and install Kohler products on the job, such actions would be a secondary boycott in violation of the Taft-Hartley Act and other State Laws. Likewise, you cannot and must not request employees of other employers not to handle and install Kohler products during the course of their employment.

You can help the Kohler Workers, however, by requesting your friends, your employers, and other trade unionists and the purchasing public *Not to Buy Kohler Plumbing Wares and Products.*

Fraternally yours,

(Signed) PETER T. SCHOEMANN,
General President,
United Association of Journeymen
and Apprentices of the
Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry.

WHY WE STRIKE

● We're the Kohler workers. Look us over. We're good, honest, church-going people. We'd like to have you get acquainted with us . . . and our problem.

Right now more than 2,000 of us—with an average of more than 10 years' seniority—have been on strike longer than any other group of workers in the nation. When Kohler Co. cancelled its contract with our Union, and then refused to bargain in good faith . . . we had to hit the bricks.

Today our ranks are just as solid and our determination just as firm as they were the day the strike started, April 5, 1954 . . . well over a year ago.

We believe we are entitled to the same working conditions, the same degree of security that has become the standard for factory workers throughout America. We're striking for such basic things as seniority and arbitration of discipline and discharges.

Children born since this strike started are taking their first few halting steps and uttering their first words now. We think all of our children, who may, as many of us did, face the choice between working at Kohler Co. and leaving their hometown, should have a better break than we have had all these years.

Most of us were born in Sheboygan County, the heart of Wisconsin's dairyland. Many of our fathers and grandfathers worked for Kohler Co., the only big employer in the area. For well over a generation, Kohler Co. has made a fabulous profit by paying its workers less than its competitors and working them harder—often under unhealthy conditions.

Twenty-one years ago Kohler Co.'s private army broke a strike with tear gas, guns, clubs. Kohler Co., through Kohler Village—virtually a part of the Company—still has a supply of these same weapons; still seeks to carry on its labor relations the same way it did a generation ago.

Kohler Co. actually asks us to end the strike on terms whereby most of us would be on the outside while scabs hired since the strike started work our jobs.

Fantastic? It can't happen here in America? Maybe. We hope you will read our story and then judge for yourself.





KOHLER STRIKE HIGHLIGHTS



The Kohler Co. notified the Union of its intention to terminate the contract on December 12, 1953. This action took place prior to the Union advising the Company of its desire to modify and amend the existing agreement.



In order to avoid a strike the Union asked the Company to extend the existing contract until a satisfactory agreement could be reached. The Company rejected the Union's request for a contract extension. The members of Local 833, however, still desiring to settle their differences with the Company across the bargaining table, decided to work without a contract in an effort to reach a fair and satisfactory settlement. **The Kohler workers worked without a contract from March 1, 1954, to April 5, 1954.**



On July 8, 1954, Governor Walter Kohler, nephew of the Kohler Co. President, Herbert V. Kohler, asked the Union and the Company to agree to arbitrate the matters in dispute. The Union accepted the Governor's proposal. The Kohler Co. arrogantly rejected it.



In September, 1954, Circuit Judge Arold F. Murphy tried to mediate the dispute, but gave up in disgust because of the Company's uncompromising attitude.

DON'T BUY KOHLER PRODUCTS...

ONE KOHLER CO. GOAL

GET RID OF THE UNION

Before we get into the story, we would like to get the demands clearly established. Kohler Co. has just one basic demand on the Union—that it cease to exist. Kohler workers believe the root cause of the strike is the Company's fanatical hatred of unions and its willingness to go to almost any length to deprive its workers of their right to join a bona fide trade union.

To that end, Kohler Co. announced that 90 men will "never" be rehired. The discharged men include every officer, every Local 833 Executive Board member, every steward except one (who has been out of town since the strike started), and most of the chairmen of the various strike committees . . . in other words, everybody in leadership. These 90 individuals have worked for Kohler Co. for a combined total of more than 1,000 years.

Late this past July, Kohler Co. told the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service the only basis for settling the strike would be by leaving the present scab force intact. It said it would call back a "minimum" of 500 strikers.

Kohler Co.'s chief spokesman, Lyman Conger, puts it quite bluntly: "Frankly, (we) would not grieve to see Local 833 broken in this struggle."



The fathers of some of these teen-agers have been discharged by Kohler Co., but as the picture shows, they face the future with enthusiasm and confidence. These youngsters, and their chaperones, are part of the Local 833 chorus formed during the strike.

7

BASIC ISSUES

The Union has made several reductions in its demands in the hope that this would stimulate bargaining. It hasn't. Now there are seven basic issues in dispute . . . all of them items which most companies and workers would take for granted. They are:

- 1 ARBITRATION**—The Union asks for a standard arbitration-grievance procedure including arbitration of disciplinary action and discharges.

Kohler Co. refuses to let an "outside" arbitrator decide on the merits of such cases that might arise. Local 833 members believe that if they do not have arbitration of discharges and disciplinary action, Kohler Co. will use this power in an effort to tear apart their Union . . . and they point to the discharge of 90 leaders of their Local as evidence of the Company's attitude.

The alternative to arbitration is strike action every time an honest difference of opinion arises. In place of an impartial judge, Kohler Co. prefers the law of the jungle.

- 2 SENIORITY**—Kohler workers are asking for full seniority protection.

The Kohler Co. wants a 10 per cent deviation from seniority on layoffs. (This means that the Company could . . . and from its history surely would . . . use the 10 per cent seniority deviation as a device for laying off the workers most likely to stand up for their rights . . . could make the man who filed a grievance a marked man.)

- 3 WAGE INCREASE**—Local 833 originally asked for a 20-cent general increase plus an additional 10 cents for skilled trades workers as a step toward bringing Kohler rates in line with those paid elsewhere in the industry. In the hope of expediting bargaining, it reduced its demand to 10 cents across the board plus an additional nickel for skilled trades.

Despite substantial wage increases elsewhere in the plumbingware industry in 1954 and again in 1955, Kohler Co. did not

KOHLER WORKERS' DEMANDS

move beyond its original 3-cent "postage stamp" offer during the first 15 months of the strike. Late in July, 1955, Kohler Co. upped its offer by a nickel plus another five cents for skilled workers.

- 4 PENSIONS**—Kohler workers are asking for non-contributory pensions such as are standard in the automobile, steel, rubber and most of the plumbingware industry. (The UAW-CIO represents more plumbingware workers than any other union. Thousands also are represented by the United Steelworkers of America-CIO.)

Kohler Co. still insists on a contributory plan which is, in effect, a wage cut to those workers who can afford to participate.

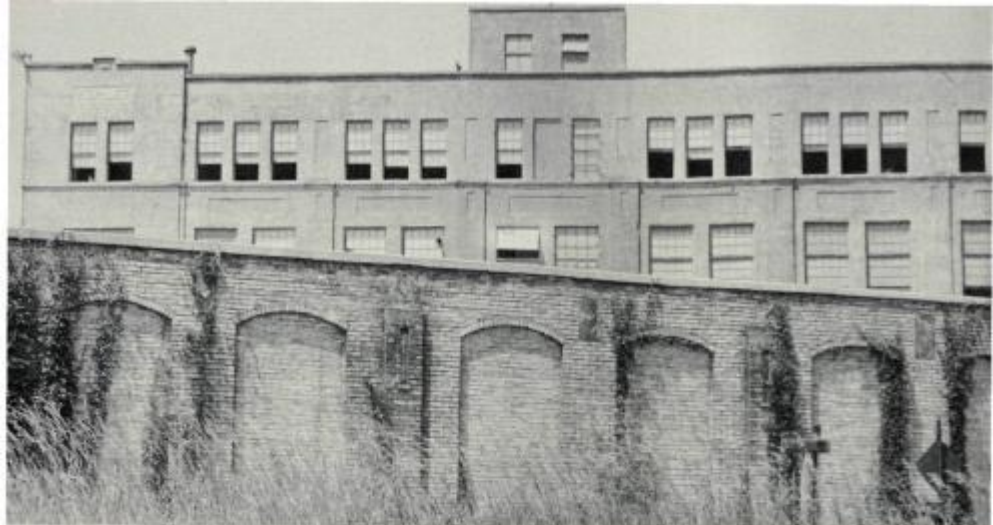
- 5 LUNCH PERIOD FOR ENAMEL SHOP**—Enamelers are entitled to the same company-paid 20-minute lunch period received by workers on other 3-shift operations.

Kohler Co. still contends enamelers should eat while working. Enamelers handle tubs heated to 1,760 degrees Fahrenheit. It's the hottest and heaviest work in the plant. These workers have as great a need for a meal period as any others on continuous operations.

- 6 REALLY 90 MORE ISSUES**—Local 833 members demand that the 90 strike leaders discharged by the Company . . . during the strike . . . be returned to the seniority lists . . . and that all be returned to their jobs when the strike is over.

- 7 WHEN THE STRIKE ENDS**, every striker must have his job back. The more than 2,000 on strike have a combined total of more than 23,000 years of seniority.

Kohler Co. has offered to take back a "minimum" of 500 workers; demands that the strikebreaking force be left intact. It indicates that any strikers rehired after a few months would be treated as "new employees."



This is the face that Kohler Co. presents to its workers . . . a prisonlike wall fencing off the Kohler domain from the rest of the world.

THE STRIKE RUNS LONG BECAUSE ITS ROOTS ARE DEEP...

More than 2,000 members of Local 833 have been on strike since April 5, 1954. For more than a year, Kohler Co. has been recruiting a scab force from a wide area. It has tried to browbeat, frighten and coerce its regular work force into returning into the plant.

Yet, today Kohler workers are just as determined to win a fair contract as they were the day they hit the bricks. To understand the intensity of their feelings requires going back generations. This strike has been building that long.

The Kohler family traces its heritage to feudal times. The Kohlers were barons in Austria. They controlled the land, and those who worked their estates. They brought their concept of the master-servant relationship with them when they came to this country after the Civil War.

They built the Kohler plumbingware factory and the adjoining Kohler Village. Workers were supposed to live in the village. They had to paint their houses the color Kohler Co. dictated. The man who planted the "wrong" kind of tree was in trouble. That might spoil the planning in the "Bathtub Barony."

IRON-FIST TRADITION

The surrounding area was—and is—predominantly German and Dutch. Some of the Germans brought their union traditions with them when they came to the new country. They were quickly suppressed. Their sons grew up in the shadow of Kohler Co. So did the Kohler Co. presidents.

The iron-fist tradition was established . . . as a condition of life for workers . . . as a matter of "right" for the Kohler Co. presidents.

Scattered strikes before 1934 were quickly met and beat down. In 1934, the AFL began organizing the plant. When its efforts to secure a contract failed, it called a strike.

In 1934, Edmund Biever, then assistant police chief of Kohler Village, admitted under oath that he directed that tear gas be fired at strikers so that coal cars could be brought into the plant. He testified that he later directed a private Kohler force to fire tear gas when a crowd formed outside the plant.

In the ensuing confusion, a fusillage of shots rang out. Biever said, under oath, that his gas gun brigade had obeyed orders to fire into a railroad bank near the highway.

Two men were killed by bullets . . . not gas. Forty-seven men, women and children were wounded, many seriously. Most were shot in the back.

THE MAN WHO SHOT TO THE TOP

Kohler workers refer to Biever as "the man who shot to the top of the management hierarchy." He is now works manager.

In 1934 an "independent" union was formed to combat the AFL. The first president, who knew nothing about unions then and who is a loyal member of the UAW-CIO now, testified under oath, that the idea originated with the Company . . . and its officers were "engineered in" by the Company.

Fear broke the strike. Fear gripped the community. Fear broke the spirits of men in the plant. Production rates, always high, soared. Tired men are less likely to form unions.

Herbert V. Kohler, the president of Kohler Co., was inside the plant the night the shots were fired. He became president a few years later.

In 1946, when organizers tried again, Kohler Co. propagandists inserted statements in the Independent Union's newspaper . . . in the name of the Independent Union . . . wrote scripts which the Independents were supposed to read as their own.



John Razal, 68, would like to retire. His reward for 27 years' service would be \$5.93 a month from Kohler Co. as a "pension." John Razal is still on strike . . . for a real pension.

KOHLER RATES WERE FAR BEHIND

While leaders of the Independent Union resented this "meddling," the organizing drive failed. But officers of the Independent began comparing their wages and working conditions with those of other workers. They knew Kohler Co. was behind the times . . . they were shocked to discover how far behind. Men who were born in Sheboygan County and who had lived most of their lives there began taking a longer look at the rest of the world.

Their resentment boiled to the point that workers took another strike vote . . . and the whole community held its breath. The workers gained some concessions . . . and the community exhaled.

By 1952, Kohler workers were convinced that they must affiliate with an International Union if they were to secure a fair contract. They voted to join with the UAW-CIO. Kohler Co. refused to abide by their decision. So the workers called for an NLRB election.

KOHLER SPOKESMEN BLAST UNION ON AIR

Kohler Co. fought the Union with full page ads and frequent radio speeches by the executives. Officers of the old independent union were branded traitors. Kohler Co. formed another independent union . . . which got on the ballot.

Kohler workers again voted to join the UAW-CIO. When the ballots were counted, Lyman Conger, chief Kohler Co. negotiator, and the self-proclaimed head of the new company union walked out side by side with their eyes to the floor.

Kohler workers greeted the NLRB victory with the exuberance of men who had just been released from a prisoner of war camp.

There was literally dancing in the streets of Sheboygan the night the results were in. Men whose entire lives had been dominated by Kohler Co. actually shed tears of gratitude "because now we got the Union."

Emil Mazey, secretary-treasurer of the UAW-CIO International Union, Harvey Kitzman, UAW Region 10 Director, and local union members openly pledged to the community—and to Kohler Co.—their full cooperation in establishing an era of real industrial peace inside the seething Kohler Co. plant.

Many a Kohler worker prayed fervently that this was the dawn of a brighter day.

But Lyman Conger had just begun to fight.



Pop's on the picket lines, so his helpers spell out the latest news from the daily mimeographed strike bulletin.



EIGHT MONTHS OF BARGAINING

Kohler workers have had just one contract since they joined the UAW-CIO. It took eight months to negotiate. For months, the Company offered virtually nothing.

Workers, accustomed to having Lyman Conger, chief Company spokesman, say, "No," to their mounting grievances, pegged him as a "No Man," in negotiations. They grew more exasperated. The fear, which they had to overcome to bring in the Union, ebbed away.

Finally they took a strike vote.

Faced with a strike in a booming construction period, Kohler Co. made some grudging concessions. The contract was settled just before the strike deadline.

For a first contract, it had a lot in its favor. It established a better grievance system. It included some fairly substantial wage increases.

The trouble was . . . Kohler workers had such a long way to go before they caught up with the rest of the plumbingware industry.

Kohler workers repeated, at the time the contract was signed, they hoped this was the start of a new era of peaceful industrial relations in their community.

If they had any illusions, they were quickly shattered.

Kohler Co. still fought grievances bitterly. Two of the three that went to arbitration, Kohler Co. lost.

The battery of Kohler Co. lawyers still opposed nearly every unemployment compensation claim . . . still carried unfavorable decisions to higher courts . . . and then appealed again . . . and again.

Looking back, it appears that Kohler Co. had decided right at the outset that it would try first to discredit and then to break the Union.

This Kohler Worker was shot in the back



It happened during a strike on July 27, 1934. Gunfire from inside the Kohler plant killed two good men, wounded 47 men, women and children. Most of them were hit as they ran from the scene. Ever since that fatal day, Kohler workers have been rebuilding their ranks . . . beating back fear . . . rekindling their pride in themselves so they could win the justice on the job denied them 21 years ago—by gunfire.

A BRUTAL APPROACH...

TO WORKERS' PROBLEMS



HERBERT V. KOHLER

Maybe this will give you a quick idea of what Kohler workers are up against. These are just a few of the anti-people sentiments expressed by top Kohler executives since the strike.

"You have to bargain . . . but you don't have to give them anything to bargain."

HERBERT V. KOHLER, *president, quoted May 31, 1954 in the Milwaukee Journal.*

Max Raskin (UAW-CIO attorney): "How many guns have you?"

Herbert V. Kohler: "Plenty."

Raskin: "Any tear gas bombs in the plant?"

Kohler: "I got a suspicion . . . if they had tear gas, I wouldn't object."

Wisconsin Employment Relations Board Hearing, May 7, 1954

(Under community pressure, tear gas bombs and riot guns later were removed from Kohler Co. plant)

"He (Herbert V. Kohler) turned around and said; that the pickets on the line, when he got through with them, will crawl back on their bellies begging for their job."

Picket Francis Olin in NLRB hearings, June 20, 1955

"He came walking up through the line . . . he had a club in his hand . . . and somebody says, 'Who are you?' Mr. Kohler says, 'I am the law here,' and then somebody said, 'What do you mean?' He says, 'My name is Herbert V. Kohler.'"

Gate 3 Picket Captain Carl Blankenmeier, WERB Hearings, May 18, 1954

"Frankly (we) would not grieve to see Local 833 . . . broken in this struggle. If anyone would like to speculate on the basis of what happened here after the 1934 strike, they are at liberty to do so."

LYMAN CONGER, *chief negotiator and chairman of Kohler Co. management committee in interview with Dion Henderson, Associated Press reporter, May 2, 1955*

"He (Lyman Conger) said there had been a bitter strike in 1934; that it resulted in 20 years of labor peace, and that he was going to insist that this strike bring to the Company 20 years of labor peace and that at some place along the line, he said, 'We are going to teach the Union a lesson.'"

Circuit Judge AROLD MURPHY in NLRB hearings, June 29, 1955



LYMAN CONGER

"Democritus said, words are but the shadows of actions." —Plutarch

KOHLER CO. *forced* THE STRIKE

Make no mistake about it, Kohler Co. wanted this strike. Local 833 members believe the Company started preparing for it even before the first contract was signed.

Kohler Co., not Local 833, terminated the first contract.

The Union, not Kohler Co., asked for bargaining to continue after the contract expired. Local 833 members worked from March 1, 1954, to April 5, 1954, without a contract.

Kohler Co., offered a 3-cent wage increase . . . at a price. The price was weakening the contract. That was a smoke-screen. To workers who were then making from 20 to 50 cents an hour LESS than workers doing the same jobs for Kohler competitors, a 3-cent "postage stamp" raise could not represent a serious offer. It offered nothing on pensions, nothing on health insurance, nothing on inequities.

Instead of bargaining, Kohler Co. laid in a new supply of tear gas . . . put barricades around the gates . . . walked out of negotiations.

America's most reactionary company was set for an all-out effort to break the Union.

KOHLER CO. REFUSES TO BARGAIN

No company has ever resisted collective bargaining with more fanatic tenacity than Kohler Co. It has rejected all efforts to bring the parties together. With equal arrogance it brushed aside proposals by Governor Walter J. Kohler, Federal Judge Robert Tehan, a group of United States Senators and many, many other interested individuals and groups who sought to bring about a settlement.

What follows are just some of the highlights of a haughty company's refusal to meet its collective bargaining obligations to its workers and its community:

April, 1954—The Federal Mediation Service urged the Union to continue working without a contract; urged both sides to continue negotiations in an effort to forestall a strike. The Union agreed. Kohler Co. walked out of negotiations leaving Kohler workers no choice but striking.

May 7, 1954—The Wisconsin Employment Relations Board asked for continuous day-to-day bargaining. Local 833 agreed to keep talking until there was a contract. Kohler Co. refused to bargain over the weekend; refused to change its bargaining position.

May 15, 1954—Federal Judge Robert Tehan offered a truce plan. The Union accepted it, Kohler Co. rejected it.

June 1, 1954—The Union modified its demands as Lawrence E. Gooding, chairman of the Wisconsin Employment Relations Board, personally entered into negotiations. Kohler Co. made no change in its position . . . **WALKED OUT OF NEGOTIATIONS** on June 29.

LYMAN CONGER, right, leads a battery of Kohler Co. attorneys from the office of Sheboygan Mayor Rudolph Plotz. Mayor Plotz asked both sides to discuss the issues; the Kohler spokesman angrily refused to talk because newsmen were present.



July 8, 1954—Governor Walter J. Kohler, a nephew of Kohler Co. president, Herbert V. Kohler, asked both sides to submit the issues in dispute to arbitration.
The Union accepted.

Kohler Co. angrily turned the offer down in a letter, made public, in which it criticized the governor for interfering with Kohler Company's private business.

August 10, 1954—The Federal Conciliation Service called the parties together. The Union dropped many of its demands . . . leaving seven. The Union reduced its wage demand as a stimulant to bargaining. Kohler Co. made no change in its position . . . walked out of the bargaining session.

September 1, 1954—Circuit Judge Arold F. Murphy entered negotiations. Lyman Conger, chief Kohler Co. negotiator, told Judge Murphy that Kohler Co. "bought" 20 years of labor peace last time, was prepared to do so again.

November 10, 1954—Emil Mazey, secretary-treasurer of the UAW-CIO, submitted two proposals to Kohler Co. 1—The parties attempt to work out a contract within the framework of the contracts between competitors of Kohler Co. and the UAW-CIO. They are the Crane Co., American Standard and Sanitary and Briggs. 2—Failing in this, the parties submit the issues in dispute to arbitration with the understanding that no award could exceed the provisions of the contracts between the UAW-CIO and Kohler Co. competitors.
Kohler Co. rejected both proposals.

January 28, 1955—Clyde M. Mills, acting director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, called both parties to Washington. The UAW-CIO indicated a willingness to negotiate.

Kohler Co. spokesmen said their "offer" was unchanged; Local 833 could take it or leave it.

June 3, 1955—Senator Irving M. Ives (Rep., N.Y.) at a meeting of Senate subcommittee composed of himself and Senators Matthew Neeley (D., W.Va.), and Patrick McNamara (D., Mich.), urged both parties to negotiate then—in Washington.

The Union was willing.
Kohler Co. refused.

"Kohler Co. canceled our medical insurance after the strike started, but we're protected. The Union is paying for health coverage for all strikers and their families."



23,000 YEARS OF SENIORITY VS. SCAB FORCE OF "OUTSIDERS"

On July 26, 1955, the parties were called together in Chicago by the Federal Mediation Service amid newspaper reports of "pressure from the White House," Robert Moore, regional director, presided.

In an effort to bring about a settlement, the Union dropped two of its demands.

- 1—It agreed to drop its demand for a maintenance of membership clause in the contract and to accept the provisions of the previous contract.
- 2—It agreed to accept the Kohler Co. health-medical plan instead of the standard Blue Cross-Blue Shield plan.

Kohler Co. refuses to reinstate the 90 strike leaders it fired and removed from seniority lists. It offered to call back only 540 workers leaving more than 1,500 without jobs.

Any worker called back after November, 1955, the Company said, would be treated as a "new employee."

More than 2,000 men and women, with an average of more than 10 years seniority . . . with a total of more than 23,000 years of service to the Company . . . were offered the chance to get less than a fourth of their number back to work.

Kohler Co. did not yield on even one of the seven basic issues still in dispute.

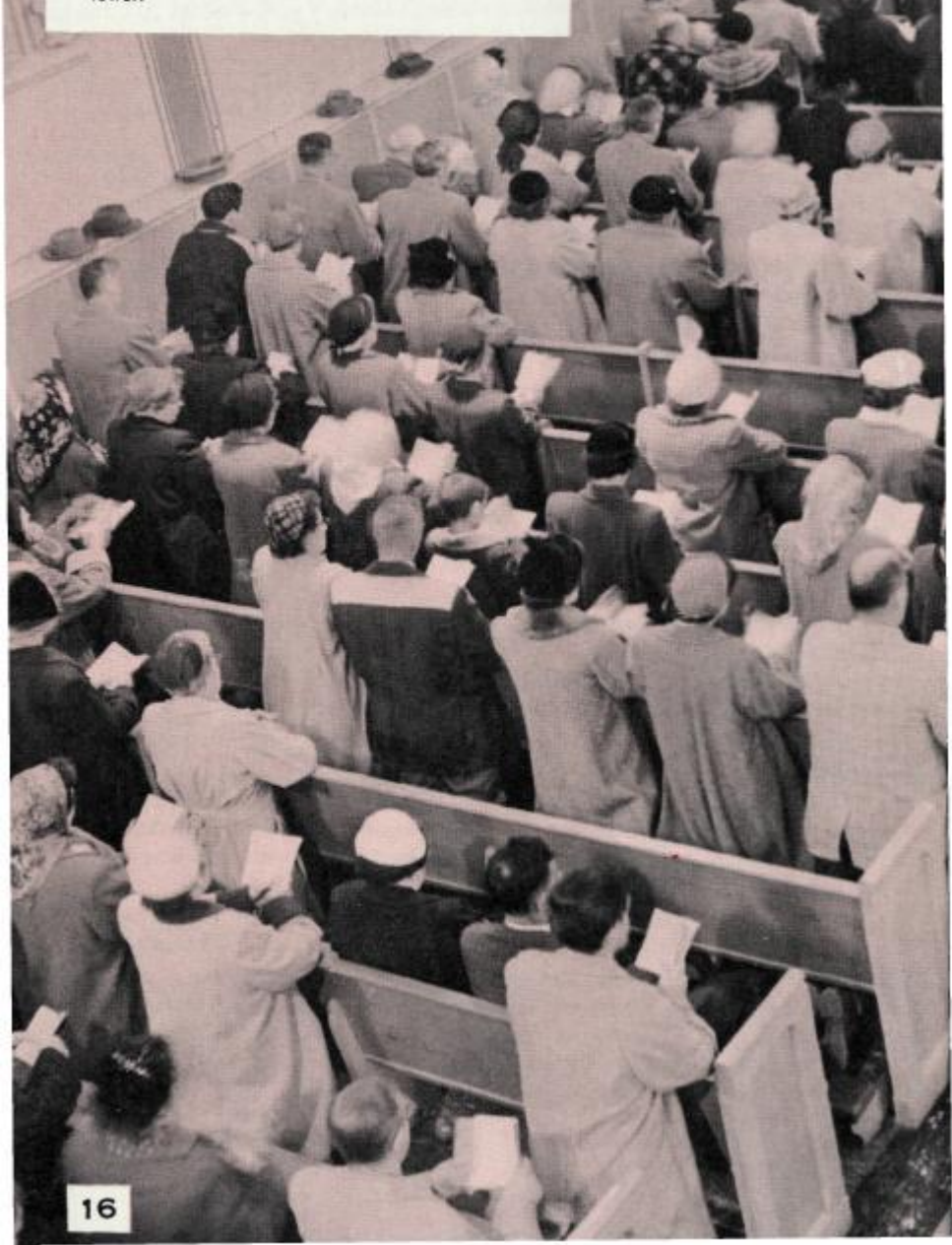
One Kohler striker summed it up, "They asked me to abandon a strike which has been building for a generation; to give up a strike on which my whole future hangs, just so the outsider who is stealing my job can have it permanently."

Despite the Company's uncompromising attitude, the Union was willing to continue talks in the hope of discovering some avenue to a peaceful settlement.

When the Union bargaining committee refused to accept the Kohler Company terms, Lyman Conger, chief Kohler Co. negotiator, once again walked out of negotiations.

Kohler workers voted unanimously to reject the Company's "latest offer."

THIS IS ONE of the weekly Novenas at which Catholic strikers, their families and friends pray for honorable negotiations and a just settlement. A Lutheran member of Local 833 once pointed out that there are more deacons walking the picket line than there are offices in the Kohler executive tower.



IN PLACE OF NEGOTIATING . . . KOHLER TRIED **UNION BUSTING**

Kohler Co.'s strategy is clear. It refuses to negotiate. It secured an injunction limiting picketing. For more than a year it has recruited scabs from a wide area. It takes full advantage of every anti-labor law to achieve production with a scab force; ignores its moral and legal obligation to bargain in good faith.

America could have no finer example of the inequities of the anti-labor injunction and the Taft-Hartley law. The law enables the Company to recruit scabs to steal the jobs of the men and women on strike. The law prevents the men and women on strike from keeping the scabs out of the plant. Stealing a man's door mat may land the culprit in jail. Stealing a man's job, in which a man has invested years of his life, is perfectly legal under America's anti-labor laws . . . but morally wrong.



"My Pop's been fired by Kohler Co. 'cause he won't go back in the plant. Mom 'n' me are counting on the Union to win the strike and get his job back."

The government is helping Kohler in other ways. The U. S. Defense Department helped bolster Kohler Co.'s sagging income with more than two million dollars in shell contracts. Emil Mazey, UAW-CIO Secretary-Treasurer, testified at a Senate Sub-Committee hearing that these shells cost the United States . . . all of us . . . nearly a quarter of a million dollars more than they would have if Kohler Co. had not received special concessions because it is a struck plant.

WISCONSIN BOARD CRITICIZES KOHLER CO.

The Wisconsin Employment Relations Board bitterly assailed the Company's attitude on industrial relations . . . especially its reliance on a private arsenal, but the Wisconsin Board also got an injunction for Kohler Co. which limits number of pickets to 25 at each of the 8 gates.

Despite the efforts achieved through laws which shackle workers, Kohler Co. has been unable to break the strike. Strike breakers, recruited from a wide area, lack the efficiency and experience of regular production workers.

A steady decline in the orders placed with Kohler Co. and its admitted inability to provide work for as many people as were employed before the strike, is tangible evidence of the effect on companies of long strikes. Kohler workers believe that the Taft-Hartley law encourages companies to attempt strike breaking which accounts, in part, for the length of the strike forced on them.

Guilty of FALSE ADVERTISING

If Kohler Co. had made as many misrepresentations about its products as it does about this strike, it couldn't have stayed in business.

Take, for example, the matter of Kohler Co. wages. The Company piously argues that its wages are high . . . and supports its claim with trick statistics. Actually, Kohler wages fall far below those paid by leading competitors.

Kohler Co. refuses to give the Wisconsin Industrial Commission its wage data . . . but copiously distorts Commission figures to make its case.

Kohler Co. compares its wages to averages for whole groups of workers. It literally compares its factory wages to average wages for whole communities which include store clerks and other low paid workers.

Kohler Co. also compares its overtime earnings with the straight-time earnings elsewhere.

Here are some samples of how Kohler wages compare with those paid workers doing the exact same jobs for a Kohler Co. competitor.

KOHLER WAGES ARE LOW

	<i>Kohler Co. Rate</i>	<i>Briggs Beautyware</i>	<i>Kohler Workers Are Behind—</i>
Sweeper.....	\$1.48	\$1.885	42½ cents
Stock Clerk (Jr.)...	1.53	1.885	35½ cents
Elevator Op.....	1.50	1.885	38½ cents
Labor (Ave.).....	1.60	1.885	28½ cents
Truck Driver.....	1.80	2.115	31½ cents
Electrician.....	2.08	2.695	61½ cents
Tool and Die.....	2.26	2.805	54½ cents

Before the first contract with the UAW-CIO went into effect in 1953, Kohler Co. paid some workers, including sweepers, as little as 83 cents an hour, or 17 cents less than the new national minimum wage.

KOHLER VILLAGE

Model or Myth?

KOHLER
POPULATION 1716

DRIVE CAREFULLY
^{IN}
SCHOOL ZONES

Kohler Co. brochures invariably carry many pictures of Kohler Village with honeyed words about the pleasant life workers live in this 'model community.'

It's a pretty little village all right . . . for supervision.

Kohler Co. normally employs a production force in excess of 3,300; has another 350 supervisors and foremen; a battery of top officials and several hundred office workers. Yet, as the sign shows, the number of men, women and children in Kohler Village is only 1716.

By actual count only 119 production workers and their families live in Kohler Village. The rest live in nearby Sheboygan and the surrounding villages. Twenty-five single men lived in the American Club, Kohler Village hotel, before the strike. All were ejected after refusing to go back to work.

Kohler Co. equipment is used in grooming pretty little Kohler Village. Scabs in the plant are part of the police force. Tear gas and machine guns are housed in the freshly-painted police station.

Kohler Village is anything but a model village for workers. It fits too neatly into Kohler Company's plans to suppress workers.

This is a typical home in Kohler Village. Its occupant, Leland Dykes, used to live in an ancient, sagging frame house. He moved into this home after he led a small band of strikebreakers into the plant. Payoff? What else?





Every week Kohler workers, and often whole families like this one, come to strike assistance headquarters for the vouchers and checks which make it possible for them to continue their strike. Only a large union can support a strike assistance program like this which may be one reason Kohler Co. fought so bitterly the move by its workers to affiliate with the UAW-CIO.

From all over the nation, labor unions have sent Kohler workers tangible evidence of their support. District 10 of the International Association of Machinists-AFL sent two truck-loads of food to the strike kitchen and a check for \$2,500.



WE COULDN'T PAY IT BACK —IN 100 YEARS

Make no mistake about it . . . Kohler workers are going to win this strike. Each day that passes their equity in it increases.

People often ask, "But how can a family man stay out on strike for over a year?"

The answer certainly ISN'T that Kohler workers had bank accounts. At Kohler wages, many Kohler workers were never able to buy automobiles. Married workers never drive new cars. Few Kohler workers had any financial reserves.

They have been able to stick it out only because of millions of dollars from their Union and moral support from thousands of friends.

The UAW-CIO International Union has supplied more than \$5½ million dollars to help Kohler workers win their strike.

It has given Kohler workers more money in strike assistance than the Kohler local could pay back in dues in 100 years.

Local unions and other international unions from all over the country have donated several hundred thousand dollars more to the cause. Others have given food and shoes, clothing and toys. Kohler workers aren't enjoying any frills. Many wives are still wearing the dresses they bought two years ago. But they are getting by.

LOCAL MERCHANTS HELP, TOO

Many local merchants send food to the strike kitchen. They also help with clothing and money and moral support.

Sheboygan, a community dominated by one Company for more than 20 years, by and large gives Kohler workers its wholehearted backing.

Kohler workers' children go to movies every Saturday at union hall.

The women have bingo parties, without money; the men enjoy scat and sheep-head tournaments. Everybody enjoys the Local's talent shows and contests.

Every Kohler striker knows he has been able to sweat it out all these months because millions of working people all over America are marching shoulder to shoulder with him in spirit and are giving him practical help in the struggle.



An excited young lady hugs her new shoes, the gift of a UAW-CIO local union.



After nine months on strike, Lyman Conger, Kohler Company spokesman, repeated his old claim that Local 833, UAW-CIO, no longer represented a majority of the workers. At a by membership card only meeting a short time later, Kohler workers filled the Sheboygan Armory . . . the biggest turnout in the Local's history (above). They filled the Armory again in July, 1955, (below) when they unanimously rejected the Kohler "offer."



OUR WOMEN STAND BY US

The Kohler workers' strike is a family affair. Even the teen-agers have formed their own organization to do all they can to help. The wives and daughters have made the Local 833 Auxiliary the largest in the UAW-CIO. Wives help in the strike kitchen, help tell the strikers' story to merchants and neighbors and civic groups in nearby communities; man the picket lines during Local meetings and arrange dozens of affairs to keep people busy during the long drawn-out dispute. One striker summed it up, "Our women stand by us. Because everybody in our homes believes in the strike. We help each other keep our morale up. The victory which must come will be the wives' victory too."



Hot coffee, soup and sandwiches are always available at the Local 833 Strike Headquarters on Lower Falls Road.



There is never a shortage of volunteers for making sandwiches for the boys on the picket lines. These women estimate that they have handled enough bread and meat since the strike started to fill a freight car.

TEAR GAS, GUNS and CLUBS



Riot guns like the one pictured above were removed from Kohler Co. after its president's testimony before the Wisconsin Employment Relations Board.

Kohler Co. used tear gas, guns and clubs to break the 1934 strike. Kohler workers have every reason to believe the Company is still willing to turn these weapons on people . . . on them.

Early in the strike, Herbert V. Kohler, president of the Company, said under oath, he "had a suspicion" tear gas was in the plant. When the entire Sheboygan community arose in protest, Kohler Co. had riot guns and tear gas shells taken from inside the plant across the street to the Kohler Village police station.

The sheriff of Sheboygan County confiscated these weapons.

The president of Kohler Co. also admitted, under oath, that he sometimes carries a billy club, a souvenir of the 1934 strike.

Subsequently it became a matter of public record that strikebreakers on the Village police force have been trained in Kohler Village on how to use tear gas weapons and machine guns.

KOHLER VILLAGE BREAKS STATE LAW

Local 833 has protested that it is a violation of state law for a village to possess tear gas and machine guns.

When Local 833 members marched in front of the Kohler Village police station carrying empty violin cases . . . to call attention to the machine guns . . . the police chief of Kohler Village arrested them.

The Village applied to the sheriff of Sheboygan County for permission to possess machine guns, the same as admitting illegal possession. When that was denied, the Village formed a "Humane Society." Walde-mar Cappelle, chief of police, a member of the board of directors, claims Wisconsin law provides that humane societies can have automatic weapons.

Kohler Co., which broke a strike 21 years ago with tear gas, guns and clubs, still has a tear gas-guns-clubs labor policy, workers say.

THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD FINALLY BRINGS KOHLER CO. TO TRIAL

● As this booklet goes to press, the National Labor Relations Board is processing the longest, and most complex case in recent Wisconsin history against Kohler Co.

It involves more than a million words of testimony.

Kohler Co. faces 11 unfair labor practice charges . . . including refusal to comply with an NLRB order when it was found guilty of an earlier unfair labor practice charge.

Much of the testimony has shocked even Sheboygan . . . which is too well acquainted with Kohler Co.'s attitude toward labor.

Kohler Co.'s 20-year record of trying to keep its workers from having a Union is getting a thorough airing.

The Company's willingness to break the strike . . . at any cost to the high-seniority workers involved . . . is getting a full investigation.

Little publicized outside of Wisconsin, scores of workers have testified, in halting, often broken language, about the conditions they put up with for too long inside the plant.

They tell of a family-owned Company which is brutally, fanatically opposed to recognizing the rights of its workers as human beings.

Herbert V. Kohler, Kohler Co. president, at left, tells the NLRB trial examiner he still thinks tear gas is the "humane" way to handle strikers.



HOW DO YOU STOP SILICOSIS?

Kohler workers hope that when the contract finally comes, Kohler Co. will develop a more humane attitude toward workers. One of their problems is silicosis. The silicosis rate in the plant, particularly in the foundry and pottery, is incredibly high. Kohler workers complain that the Company doctors do not tell them when they have the disease. Sheboygan County doctors nearly always **refuse to handle silicosis cases**, if that means testifying before the Wisconsin Workmen's Compensation Board.



Some candidly admit they are under too much pressure from Kohler Co. Kohler Co. fights nearly all silicosis compensation claims. Even workers with 10 and 20 years seniority get little or no help from Kohler Co., when silicosis crops up.

The UAW-CIO International Union had to go to Milwaukee to get a clinic which would handle silicosis problems. In Sheboygan County, well off the main roads, there is a sanitarium called Rocky Knoll. Kohler workers ironically refer to it as the "Kohler Country Club." Too many workers go to Rocky Knoll for their final days. Too often the Club is the last stop before the graveyard. Fear of silicosis grips many workers. A good question to Kohler workers is "how do you go about writing just plain humanity into a contract."

Many Kohler workers wonder, and with reason, "Are my lungs full of the dust?"

A KOHLER WORKER'S FAMILY

Grandfather, not pictured, spent 45 years with Kohler Company. He became a supervisor and then wound up with a tack hammer in the Crating Department. His son, holding sign, has five children. There is silicosis in his background. Oldest son, left, also works at Kohler Company. Grandfather and father hope the boy gets a better break than they did; are willing to have the strike last until that's assured.



Reward

FOR YEARS OF SERVICE

Frank Novak has silicosis. That's the slow death. It comes from inhaling too much of the wrong kind of dust in foundries and potteries.

For years both Novak and Pete Gasser lived at the American Club, a company-operated hotel in Kohler Village. They stayed there although both were on strike. Novak walked no picket lines. His health wouldn't let him.

Frank Novak had worked for Kohler Company since 1920. Last New Year's Day, he was told he had to get out of the American Club by noon. He could find no place to go. The next day was Sunday. He still was ejected from the Club when he returned from his fruitless search for accommodations. He was obviously grateful for the chance to tell his story to the National Labor Relations Board.

When the NLRB trial examiner said, "That is all, Sir, you are excused," Novak exclaimed, "That is all? I have some more talk here (pointing to his heart) . . . thirty-five years working in Kohler Company."

Gasser's story is even more abrupt.

He went out to Rocky Knoll to visit another Kohler worker confined with silicosis. His friend dared him to take a silicosis test.

Pete Gasser, a good union man, long-time worker, is now at Rocky Knoll.

THE KOHLER WORKERS CRUSADE— A MATTER FOR AMERICA'S CONSCIENCE

● Kohler workers believe theirs is not just a strike . . . but a crusade. Like all true crusades, theirs is a struggle to gain a better way of life; a temporary sacrifice to right wrongs which have been compounded for decades.

Almost any red-blooded American, working under the same conditions Kohler workers endured . . . subjected to the same company pressures Kohler workers faced . . . would try to better his lot, by strike action if necessary.

Actually Kohler workers had no choice but hitting the bricks. Americans generally agree that many strikes are justified. How then can America justify the laws under which strikes are conducted?

The same law which permits . . . and even encourages . . . companies to recruit a force of strikebreakers, permits . . . and even encourages . . . injunctions against picketing.

A strikebreaker, no matter how innocent of industrial affairs, is still a job thief. He undermines the security of family breadwinners who have invested years of their lives in their jobs.

By encouraging recruiting strikebreakers, the Taft-Hartley law encourages companies like Kohler Co. to try to break unions instead of bargaining with their employees.

How can America morally justify a law which encourages strike-breaking and, at the same time, denies workers the right to protect their jobs?

The Kohler workers strike has run on for months because the law actually helps a company avoid its collective bargaining responsibilities to its workers and the community.

Older factory workers elsewhere in America remember when they walked silent and alone beside huge, impersonal machines in cheerless factories . . . when they felt powerless to achieve their fair measure of human dignity . . . of stature as an individual. Out of the desperation thus born, unions grew and matured.

Many a Kohler worker, whose entire hope for a brighter future depends on the outcome of this strike, must feel that the Taft-Hartley law and the anti-labor injunction, were designed to thrust him personally back into the industrial dark ages.

In the August 4, 1955, issue of the Local 833 newspaper, a Kohler worker summed up his views as follows: "Last week, another scab hit the dust. Agents



With newspaper advertisements like this, Kohler Co. has recruited a scab force from a wide area.

of the FBI captured former Kohler scab Harold Zahn hiding out in the loft of a barn in Shawano. After coming down from the loft, Zahn still tried to make a break for it. One of the FBI men commented that, 'he thought he was faster than we were.'

"Last Saturday scab Zahn was arraigned before U.S. Commissioner Floyd Jenkins in Milwaukee. The charges against him are for breaking and entering the Bonduel State Bank. The charges grew out of an unsuccessful attempt to rob the bank at Bonduel.

"While stealing money from a bank is a serious crime, it still doesn't carry with it the infamous treachery that marks the crime of stealing a man's livelihood—his job. The bank is well protected and insured against any loss. The worker has no protection against the sneaky job-thievery of the scab.

"If a man tries to rob a bank, he is put in jail. For robbing an honest man of his job, the scab is not punished, but even gets the protection of the law.

"When a man's livelihood and dignity are considered less important than some printed paper (money) in a vault, then something is radically wrong with the moral values of the people who make the laws.

"All this, in a supposedly Christian country."

Kohler workers' wives help with the "Don't Buy" campaign. Frequently they speak before labor, fraternal, civic and women's organizations. When they travel, they go by car with the "Don't Buy Kohler" signs on top. "Don't Buy" posters and signs are available at Local 833 headquarters for anyone wishing to display them.



YOU CAN HELP SPEED JUSTICE

DON'T BUY KOHLER GOODS

Kohler workers believe the speediest way to bring about a settlement is for fair minded people the nation over to refuse to buy Kohler plumbing ware. If enough people won't buy scab-made Kohler plumbing and electrical systems, Kohler Co. will have no choice but to settle. In recent weeks Kohler workers have travelled a wide area promoting their "Don't Buy Kohler" campaign. They have told all who will listen about the disgraceful story of Kohler Co.'s labor relations. They know their campaign has been effective. Not all the loads of Kohler Co. ware returned to the plant could be "imperfects."

For generations Kohler workers took pride in their tradition of craftsmanship in making Kohler tubs. Until the veteran work force has returned, Kohler workers hope that no one will buy anything with the Kohler label.

The Kohler of Kohler label no longer means that Kohler ware has been built by workers whose skills have been handed down from father to son.

How can you help win the Kohler strike? Tell your friends, tell contractors you know, tell everyone, "Don't buy Kohler Company goods until the strike has been settled."

Among the Union made lines on the market are Crane, American-Standard and Sanitary, Briggs Beautyware, and Universal-Rundel.

You can count on these lines for quality and quantity.



After the UAW-CIO-Ford settlement, Msgr. Henry Riordan Pastor of St. Joseph's Church in nearby Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, summed up the situation in his weekly pastoral letter to his congregation. Monsignor Riordan wrote:

WHY THE DIFFERENCE

The Ford Corporation has settled its differences with labor peaceably and quickly. At the same time 'Kohler of Kohler' is still dragging on the year-long crucifying of its employees.

The same Walter Reuther who could come to terms with Ford pleasantly and speedily could do nothing with Kohler. But then—Ford is a gentleman and a Christian, not a vicious holdover from the days of serfdom and wage slavery. Also, Michigan evidently has a more courageous labor board than the one we support in Madison.

(Signed) YOUR PASTOR

ALL LABOR'S BATTLE

Kohler workers are striking today for the same recognition of their rights as free human beings other workers achieved 20 years ago. Industrial America has made a lot of progress since the Homestead Massacre and the Pinkerton era. In industrial relations, that progress has passed Kohler Co. by. It still thinks the way to "deal" with its employees is to break their Union instead of negotiating. Kohler Co. has used every legal, and some illegal, means in its efforts to destroy the Union of its workers.

If Kohler Co. succeeded, other reactionary employers would be encouraged to try the same thing. In fact, already scattered outbreaks of "Kohlerism"—scab recruiting—have occurred in other recent Wisconsin strikes. All labor has a stake in keeping the disease of "Kohlerism" from spreading. Inevitably the outcome of the Kohler workers strike, the longest and most publicized in the nation, will affect every working man directly or indirectly—for it will have its influence on the tone of future industrial relations.

A key part of the strike has been the support which has poured in from all over America as laboring people have given generously in money, food, clothing and moral support, knowing full well that every industrial dispute is a concern of every member of organized labor. When a just settlement finally comes, the victory will belong not just to the heroic Kohler strikers, but to the millions of friends who supported them in every way possible during their months on the picket lines. It is this willingness to help one's brother which has made the American trade union movement great.

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THIS BOOKLET is dedicated to more than 2000 courageous Kohler workers their wives and children whose courage and stamina have already earned for them a respected place in labor history.

Fate did not deal kindly with these people. They did not choose to be born in Sheboygan. They had nothing to do with making Kohler Co. the only large employer in the area . . . nothing that is but developing the skills and crafts which made the Kohler trademark respected in the plumbingware industry and producing at sub-standard working conditions the goods which made the Kohler family so rich.

If the face of fascism is to be seen anyplace in America, it is at the Kohler Company where tyranny and oppression exist to an extent almost unduplicated anyplace else on this continent.

Kohler workers have made their fight because they have had to. Freedom has always been won by people who have been ready to fight for it and maintained by those willing to stick their necks out to protect it.

In a sense the Kohler workers fight is the fight of all freedom loving people for they are giving up more than a year of their lives to the effort to make democracy work. Their goal is to win a better life for the years that remain to them, but even more important to win a brighter future for their children.

Signed:

Secretary-Treasurer
UAW-CIO International Union



PRINTED IN U. S. A.

For a more detailed history of the Kohler dispute write for the booklet "Bathtub Baron," reprinted from the UAW-CIO International Union magazine, "Ammunition." Copies may be secured from the UAW-CIO Education Department, Solidarity House, 8000 East Jefferson, Detroit 14, Michigan.

If you care to make any contribution to the Kohler strikers send it to: Kohler Workers Strike Assistance Committee, Local 833, UAW-CIO, 527A. N. 8th Street, Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

Bathtub Baron

This article is reprinted from June, 1954, issue of AMMUNITION, the monthly magazine published by the UAW-CIO Education Department. This is UAW-CIO Publication 227.



STURBORN, Andy Hovet
the nation's most important
Company, corporations—the Kohler
of bathtubs and plumbing fix-
tures and other products.

As place is about four miles
on, in Kohler Village, a company
of the bourgeoisie and landless
strides of the 19th.

Kohler owns all the land in the
Village where house owners can
get only a lease on the ground be-
neath their property. In this al-
most feudal setup, about 3,500
members of UAW-CIO Local 833
have been on strike since April 5.

Their purpose is to bring their
contract up to the wage and work-
ing conditions standards of other
UAW agreements. The strike
started only after the company
refused to agree on
terms of a new contract by the
time the old one expired.

The corporation had been pre-
pared for a walkout. That was
disclosed by Kohler a few weeks
ago in testimony which shocked
the Wisconsin Employment Rela-
tions Board.

His statements on the witness
stand brought back nightmares
of the earlier strike
when Kohler employees in 1934
attempted to form a union. Then,
weapons had been turned on the
workers.

When the strike started,
two men were dead and 47
wounded.

Now, Kohler insisted, strike and
guns again had been used in the
place. His lawsuit had checked
a 10-inch clash as he stated
though the picket line. And
Kohler added, he "supposed" the
company also had worked up on
war gas.

His "supposed" turned out to
be fact.

LOCAL 833 came into UAW-
CIO in May, 1952. Before that
Kohler workers had belonged to
a company-dominated union.



AN IF SHUTTING OFF a feudal domain, a forbidding wall blocks off the place in Kohler Village on
the grounds of Sheboygan, Wis. The village is completely company-dominated. House owners cannot
buy the land beneath their houses; all they can get on it is a 99-year lease. And before they can take
the residence, approval of the proposed order has to be obtained.



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Until a JUST CONTRACT is Signed . . .

DON'T BUY KOHLER!

PLUMBINGWARE • ENGINES
ELECTRIC PLANTS

Made by Scabs — Job Thieves

Tell all your friends "Don't buy
Kohler Co. Ware until the regular
work force secures a fair contract."

*"Don't buy KOHLER
Products — Help
my Pop WIN
the Strike!"*

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