

THE RED FLAG

A Journal of News and Views Devoted to the Working Class.

Published When Circumstances and Finances Permit
By The Socialist Party of Canada,

401 Pender Street East, Vancouver, B. C.

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SATURDAY MAY 24, 1919

The Winnipeg Strike

On Thursday, May 15, a general strike was called in Winnipeg. It was carried into effect by some 30,000 workers, representing some sixty trades. It has completely paralyzed industry in that city. So far as we can learn, the only disturbance to date was caused by some people demonstrating outside the building occupied by the strikers' central committee. We have no information of the personnel of this crowd. They were dispersed by the police. These conditions are common to general strikes. We do not require the word of "a well-known Winnipeg journalist" as assurance. There are, however, some features which are not common to sympathetic strikes, in the news dispatches from Winnipeg. The printing trades, the telegraphers, and the fire fighters, and, according to late reports, the police, have made common cause with industrial workers. That must be distressing news for the poor "public." Particularly so, after all the nice things the "public" has been saying of late, about the sane and practical craft union. "Ingratitude more strong than traitor's arms," thou art sharper than a serpent's tooth—such and so forth must be the mental comments of the dear, long-suffering public.

The strike committee controls Winnipeg and there has been no disorder. The "well-known Winnipeg journalists" are very doleful. It is difficult (aside from the opportunity riots would offer to the master class to club and shoot the workers into submission) to make much money, at so much per column, out of an orderly strike. The "well-known journalists" cannot conceal their chagrin.

No sensational happenings occurring, the next best means to attract the elusive dollars is to imagine things. John Swinton at a press dinner in New York half a century ago used harsher terms: "to pervert, to villify, to lie outright." So our local press scare the dear public out of five nights' sleep by a flaring headline, "Soviet Government proclaimed in Winnipeg." Horrible! Some one ought to start a society for prevention of cruelty to tired business men.

Monday, May 19, the Vancouver Daily Province carried over two columns of news which described circumstantially the inauguration of a Soviet government in Winnipeg at that dread hour that Tam O'Shanter mounted "his beast," in the conspirators' hour, when graves yawn (and no wonder). Midnight found three thousand strikers at some place "on the riverfront within a stone's throw of the police station, and a few blocks from the City Hall," erecting the Soviet Government. A reverend gentleman was the principal speaker. There was no disorder, some chering. Two representatives of the city council were to be invited to sit on the Soviet directory. We pause to express our dissent to this method of inaugurating a Soviet directory (?) and shall certainly use our influence to prevent Winnipeg obtaining a charter. The scheme had been "discussed for weeks by Socialistic organs circulated, some openly and others surreptitiously, through the streets of Winnipeg. Some protests from returned soldiers have been heard but apparently without provoking

energetic action, though numerous wires of protest have been sent by citizen bodies to Ottawa urging that the mounted police be instructed to act. But in spite of this novel proceeding by the strikers, Winnipeg has not got excited. In fact the feeling that bloodshed will be avoided was actually more general on Sunday at noon than in the earlier days of the strike."

Those few sentences are provocative of battle, murder and sudden death. Particularly such elegant English as "Winnipeg has not got excited" and "the feeling that bloodshed will be avoided was actually . . ." If a twelve-year-old school-boy handed such wretched composition to his teacher, bloodshed would be unavoidable. But the direct appeal to violence comes later: "Perhaps the news of the Soviet proceeding did cause some of the citizens to take a firmer grip on themselves, and their jaws became a little more resolutely set." Perchance they bespoke each other, after the manner of the gent whose wife was momentarily expecting to add to his joys and sorrows, "Be British boys! Be British!" At any rate the business men "districted" the town, and still there was no trouble. Lawyers, doctors, big merchants, etc., enrolled in the citizens' army. For what? All that silly Buffalo Mick, or Whalebone Dick, the Gun-eater, stuff is denied in the same edition of the "Province," in which it appeared. Denied in small print headings. Funny, how things work out. Since the Commissioner of the Mounted Police visited Vancouver the editorial columns of our press have been remarkably free from the riot-inciting matter which formerly occupied plenty of space. Well, the day after this dispatch we are discussing appeared, the "Province" has an editorial abjectly apologizing for the nonsensical lies of the previous day, and putting the blame on G. C. Porter, a well-known Winnipeg journalist. We hazard the opinion that G. C. Porter will be even better known in the future.

But again, on May 21, we are told that the Winnipeg strike is a revolutionary move. This time Ernest Robinson, secretary of the Trades and Labor Council, is quoted as saying that word has been received from all points between Winnipeg and the coast that they will follow the example set by the Manitoba town. The report continues, that the "citizens' paper," whatever that might be, said: "It is to the public of Winnipeg that we speak in stating without equivocation that this is not a strike at all in the ordinary sense of the term, it is a revolution. It is an attempt to overturn British institutions in this western country, and supplant them with the Russian Bolshevik system of Soviet rule."

All true citizens are urged to unite to defeat the revolution—and still there is no disorder. If the wage slaves of Canada do not learn to ignore the frantic nonsense of the press, it will be not the fault of that institution.

No doubt to the business men in Seattle the strike in that city, looked at through their fear-razed eyes, with sixty thousand slaves suddenly withdrawn from the buying of commodities, with the spring stock on hand, the banks demanding payment and the sheriff pounding on the door, must indeed have looked mountainous to them. On the other hand the stupid and bombastic utterances of the nerve broken Mayor Hanson must have caused much merriment among the slaves. And now Winnipeg and its lawyers, doctors and big merchants, are cutting an equally lucidous figure. The fact stands out, above all this melodramatic hurly-burly, that the working class is being organized, disciplined and educated by the very force of capitalist production, to a point where they can and will end the mad scramble to live on husks in a world of plenty.

Every strike finds them more united, and more minded to attend to their own business; as it also finds the business element, that class which is neither fish, flesh nor good red herring, more fear-stricken, and less capable of acting the part of men.

Strikes and lockouts, panics and industrial de-

THERE'S A FAMINE IN INDIA AND ANOTHER IN DUNDEE

Over 20,000 of Dundee's jute workers are unemployed!

They are told that the cause of their unemployment is the cut-throat competition of the low-paid Indian jute mills!

Therefore, the workers in Dundee should not ask for higher wages or shorter hours.

But the "Dundee Courier," (11/4/19) unkindly publishes reports of the annual meetings of the shareholders of three great Indian jute companies—all held upon the one day. One company, the Titaghur, shows 70 per cent. dividend; one, the Victoria, shows 60 per cent.; and the other, the Samnuggur, shows 50 per cent.

An Indian, with the Brahmin-Hindoo-Parsee name of Walter W. Duff, presided at the Samnuggur and Titaghur meetings, and a Mohammedan Rajah, called David Hynd, presided at the Victoria Company meeting.

All three shareholders' meetings were held in Dundee.

Why that?

They are Dundee companies, with Dundee capital and Dundee shareholders, although the mills are on the banks of the Hooghli.

THE "KEPT" PRESS

The "Liberal" press, which deserted Laurier, overnight on the conscription issue, in some instances pulling matter supporting him off the presses and hurriedly substituting other matter villifying him and misrepresenting his attitude, is now professing indignation at the charges brought against it by Lemieux, that it was "influenced." But, methinks it protests too much. For in this last few years, we have become sophisticated. The press as a whole has taken our gullibility too much for granted and ladled out its propaganda with more enthusiasm than discretion and in so doing overshot its mark. We became blasé and worldly-wise, and talked about "press dope" and the "stunt press." And now we smile and smile, grimly, when the "Liberal" press protests so vehemently its honesty and public spirit. We refuse to believe in a public spirit which manifests itself in five years of uncritically unqualified acceptance of the thousands of "orders-in-council" issued by the puggy bureaucrats in Ottawa. And as to honesty, the Toronto "Statesman" has this to say: "On the question of government patronage there is no dispute as to the facts brought out by Mr. Lemieux. Two million dollars of public money were expended on newspaper advertising by the Union Government, and this at a time of great depression, was equivalent to a government bonus." And when the "Liberal" press protests its righteousness so much; we, remembering its treacheries, smile and smile and smile.

pressions are inevitable in a social system, which is based on purchase and sale of every thing produced. And no society can continue to bear the shocks which have long enough and frequently enough, strained the feeble bond of cash nexus which holds the contending classes together.

It may be that some half-baked Socialist is voicing revolutionary phrases in Winnipeg. We doubt it. We know that a bunch of workers who are able to keep their heads in spite of the extreme provocation to which they are being subjected, will not allow any muddle head from their own ranks to precipitate trouble. We prefer to believe that the press is twisting and perverting utterances of strike officials in an effort to start something. We ask all Socialists to form a press clipping bureau and forward to us all provocative stuff, with the periodical and date clearly identified. We have need of it, like Christ had for the ass. J. H.