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The Labour Situation and a Possible Solution

Serious war situation renders solution of labour troubles imperative—Best brains of Country should devote themselves to it—A suggested solution.

That which looms largest in the waging of war and in the carrying on of the business of the country is labour. If the present war is to be won it must in the ultimate be won by the labouring man. If the present war is to be lost it is to be lost by the misunderstanding of the Allied Governments and the business men of the Allied countries with the labouring men. The labour situation everywhere is a serious menace to the carrying on of essential business. If one were to be sure that the war would end in six months, possibly a year, the same conditions might be borne with, but the war situation does not warrant any expectation that it will be concluded during the next six months or the next year.

Just an outline of the present state of war would compel the conclusion that peace is not near. Had Russia remained as an active belligerent the end of war might have been in sight, but chaos reigns in that great nation with those in power or those having the semblance of power acting as though they were in league with the enemy. Germany has concluded a peace with Roumania, has split up the Russian nation and with a part of which, the great agricultural districts draining into the Black Sea, is in friendly relations. The possibility of starving Germany or so far curtailing her food supply as to undermine her morale has fled from the grasp of the Allies. Germany can now count on an adequate supply of oil and full control of the food supplies of part of that great nation. It is quite probable that under German organizing ability that Russia will render valuable service to the Central Powers, although it need not be expected that it will take a military form.

Despite high hopes the submarine is still a grave menace to the Allies. Ships are being sunk faster than they are being built, although it is likely that before the year is out more ships will be built than are being sunk by the submarines.

The full weight of the power of the United States, if

the submarine does not make too serious inroads upon her available ships will not be felt until 1919 and possibly 1920. Meantime the British Empire and France must bear the full burden of active warfare.

With this serious war situation facing us we can little longer tolerate present labour conditions. Great Britain, Australia, Canada and the United States are continually in a period of strike conditions or incipient strike conditions. The building of ships so essential to the prosecution of war

is being constantly interfered with by lack of stable labour conditions. Men strike for more pay, for a fuller control of their own activities, for unsatisfactory conditions they may think they work under, and for a host of reasons both important and trivial. The labour situation with regard to the shipbuilding industry is more prominent on account of the importance of ships, but labour conditions in the manufacture of munitions and essential business is practically the same. The situation is frankly serious and very menacing. If the war is to be won it is to be won in the mines, in the forest, in the farm, the steel plant, the shipyard and in essential industry as well as upon the field of battle. This is today a war of nations and not a war of armies. The nation must fight just as much as those engaged in actual combat.

The full and complete solution of bringing the nation's full efforts to the war problem and the carrying on of essential business appears to be almost inescapable, and that is a complete socialization of the state, or what is a close approximation—the absolute con-

scription of wealth and its necessary concomitant, absolute conscription of labour. By the conscription of wealth we mean the taking over of natural resources, productive and distributive industries and all forms of industry essential to the national life, together with the supplies of money and credit by the state. By conscription of labour we mean that there shall be one employer for the entire nation and that shall be the state itself. The conditions of operations of industry and all forms of business shall be fixed and managed by the state and that all conditions of labour, including wages, shall be fixed by the state.

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