

"TELL THE WORKERS"

By BOYD CABLE

In the course of a somewhat chequered career I have learned a good deal about the Wants and the Don't Wants of the workers—learned it from the side of the employer and also as a worker, a brain worker and a sheer manual pick-and-shovel labourer.

And my latest experience during the war has confirmed me in an old and strong belief that half the labour troubles could be cut out if employers laid themselves out systematically to "Tell the Workers."

It has come to be seen rather more plainly in the last year or two that publicity, the open and frank discussion of difficulties between employers and employees, has gone far to settle rising labour troubles. This is all to the good, and the more the plan is adopted of freely ventilating any question under dispute, threshing it out and putting the points on both sides before the public, the more wild strikes and serious troubles be averted.

I have followed with interest the course of labour disputes in this and other countries for years past, and I do not recall one instance where the following broad rule failed—whichever side gains the support of public opinion, that side wins in the dispute. Public opinion may be a very vague and indefinite authority, but we know it exists; and I am convinced that its favour is the winning factor in any labour dispute.

Whichever side has a just cause to fight need only take steps to make the justice widely known to be sure of winning, because the public, unskilled as it may be in the technicalities of a dispute, appears to have an unerring instinct for "a fair deal" and to decide in certain and positive fashion which side deserves support. And whichever side public opinion supports wins.

Whatever the demands a body of workers may make, if the workers can be shown that the demands are unreasonable and unfair, and that they are going to inflict undue hardship on the public, then the workers will withdraw or moderate their demands.

As a rule, the workers, unfortunately hear only one side—their own; or anything they hear of the other side's case is a garbled and distorted one.

Let the employers then, whenever they have a labour dispute or trouble on their hands, take immediate steps to publish the facts, make them known through the Press to the public and to the workers. And, better still, let them take any and every opportunity of meeting the workers and telling them face to face what the facts are and what are the objections to any unreasonable demands they may be making.

Where the demands are not unreasonable, the

sooner the employers admit the fact and bring about a fair system of working the better for themselves.

It is not enough to have a meeting between a few representatives of the firm and of the workers. Let that be done if the workers demand it. To refuse only gives them a firmer belief in the justice of their cause.

But call the workers together and talk to them face to face, let any of them ask questions, and answer them frankly. There could be no better example of how good and quick may be the results so obtained than the recent prompt settlement of the police unrest by one straight talk from the head to a big meeting of all ranks.

D. REES AND B. BAXTER.

The following is from the Sydney Record of Oct. 2: "Some explanation would seem to be due the Labour men, and other citizens, of Cape Breton by Mr. Robert Baxter. At the sessions of the Dominion Trades and Labor Congress at Hamilton last week it was stated by President Moore that Mr. David Rees, a western member of the Executive Council during the past year, had sought to have revolutionary proposals incorporated in the council's reconstruction programme and that Mr. Rees's views were shared by Mr. Baxter. To quote President Moore: Mr. Rees's draft programme suggested as a means to 'overthrow the present system, which had caused so much misery, the establishment of Soldiers and Workers' Councils, with power to legislate. There was to be a body governing these councils which had power to make laws dealing with fundamental principles.'"

Press reports do not indicate that Mr. Baxter questioned or contradicted President Moore's statement of the case. Surely, then, some explanation is due by Mr. Baxter to the people of the island to which he belongs, and, particularly, to the labor people of the island. Did Mr. Baxter support Mr. Rees's suggestion that Soldiers and Workmen's Councils be formed with power to legislate? There has never been a more important question confronting the people of Cape Breton. The Rees proposal was a proposal that certain groups should seize power and exercise that power as it pleased. That would be revolution, nothing more and nothing less. If Mr. Baxter supported any such proposal then, the Record is convinced, he followed a course dangerous to the country and diametrically opposed to the course which the vast majority of the workmen in Cape Breton approve. If he supported any such proposal he is not the man to be in any place of leadership in the Labor movement in this island or anywhere else."

CALL THEIR BLUFF

Commenting on an article in Saturday Night, severely criticising the action of the U. M. W. leaders of C. B., the Eastern Chronicle concludes its remarks as follows:

Saturday Night seems to apply the word "proletariat" to the Cape Breton coal miners. The meaning