

The Government and the Strike

NOW that the Winnipeg strike has drawn to a momentary standstill, and the strikers have gone back to their jobs again, that is those who could get their jobs back, one can begin to make a closer study of the various factors and elements that were active in the strike situation. One is especially interested in the attitude of the government toward the strike. Not that the government is, in itself, very interesting, for to tell the truth it is wearisome and boorish but being represented as the disinterested third party to the strike, as the meek maintainer of law and order, as the impartial umpire whose only interest was to see the strike fairly and amicably settled as a sort of terrestrial god whose lofty head towers above the clouds of mortal strife and from whose lips nothing but words of wisdom, truth and justice can fall—it is interesting indeed to observe how this incarnation of bourgeois democracy acted at a psychological moment when absolute impartiality was demanded.

In the first place, there was the advent to the scene of the strike of Senator Robertson, minister of Labor, the function of whose office is, according to popular belief, to see that labor always gets a square deal. This Senator Robertson pronounced himself against the strikers before he had fairly set his feet on the streets of Winnipeg—a very partial act of a supposedly impartial official.

Then when the postal employees went on strike Borden, without more ado, initiated the policy of the government acting in the capacity of strike-breaker, by hiring outsiders to fill the places of the strikers. By this act, the government definitely showed its hostility to the strikers and their aims.

ALLIED DIPLOMACY AND THE BOLSHEVIKS.

(Continued from Page Two)

sent—Russia's seven per cent. of "bourgeois." It did effectively represent Russia's 93 per cent. of peasants and wage-earners.

Certain inert elements among the peasants might not have sent delegates. The really conscious elements had availed themselves of the summons dispatched to all councils of wage-earners and of peasants and had come to Moscow with delegates bearing the documentary evidence of their elections.

From as far east as Smolensk, from as far west as Vladivostok, from as far south as Odessa, from as far north as Murmansk, these delegates of the 93 per cent. assembled. Robins on going out of Russia, met the Vladivostok delegate at Vladivostok and the Irkutsk delegate at Irkutsk. Such encounters merely confirmed his conviction. The Fourth All-Russian Congress of Soviets was not a Congress of Soviets specialists from Petrograd and Moscow. It was a Congress broadly based on the effective mass of Russia.

It was a Congress of a Russia "real"er and "old"er than any Russia of any aristocracy. The great boots rising to the knee, the flannel shirts flowing over the breeches, the broad belts—these were the signs of a really antique country-side crowding the Hall of the Nobles.

The debate on the Peace began on the fifteenth. It continued, with scant intermissions, through to the evening of the sixteenth. Most of the talking was against the peace. At eleven-thirty on the evening of the sixteenth Lenin spoke. After him no one spoke.

At eleven-thirty he was sitting in a chair on the platform. Robins was sitting on the steps of the platform. Lenin waved to Robins to come to speak to him. Robins came.

Lenin said:

"What have you heard from your government?"

Robins said:

"Nothing.....What has Lockhart heard from London?"

Lenin said:

"Nothing."

It Allied itself with the Manufacturers' Association in opposition to the organized workers. This move on the part of the government was not without its political significance. For the relation between it and the returned soldiers was, to say the least, strained. On sending the soldiers to France to fight for bourgeois democracy and to make the world safe for foreign investments, the Borden Government had made them lavish promises: the fulfillment of which it has for the last year been trying to evade. The soldiers' patience has been severely tried by the government's hesitancy in fulfilling its promises. Moreover, the minds of many of the returned soldiers had become gradually disillusioned of their false notions of bourgeois democracy as a consequence of the harsh treatment most soldiers suffered after coming back to Canada. For most veterans had the wholly unwarranted belief that on their return from overseas, they would be laid gently on a bed of roses to be cared for by gentle hands and loving heart; in reality they have been unceremoniously discharged and left to shift for themselves. As much publicity has been given to this, the government was not ignorant of its lack of prestige among the returned men. In truth, it had been looking about for some time for an occasion to perform some glorious deed of heroism, consistent with the dignity of a bourgeois government, that would win back the lost confidence of the heroes of France. So the strike could not have come at a more opportune moment for the government. Hence Borden, with one eye on the possibility of securing a number of votes for the next election by putting a quietus on the impatience of the unemployed soldiers, and with the other eye on

Then Lenin said: "I shall now speak for the peace. It will be ratified."

He spoke for an hour and twenty minutes. He pointedly wanted to know with what resources, with what resources of fighting men, with what resources of fighting materials, the Russians would fight the Germans. He seemed to agree with the private soldiers, who once instructed the learned propagandists of the Petrograd Soviet by saying:

"It's no use approaching German generals with a copy of Karl Marx in one hand and of Friedrich Engels in the other. Those books are in German. But German generals can't understand them."

Lenin spoke, though, above all, for respite—for respite for the Revolution. His policy remained what it was in Petrograd. He would surrender Petrograd—the Imperial, the Revolutionary city. He would surrender Moscow—the Immemorial, the Holy city. He would retreat to the Volga. He would surrender anything, and retreat anywhere, if only, on some slip of land, somewhere, he might preserve the Revolution and create the Revolutionary discipline which did indeed, twelve months later, enable him to fight a war on sixteen fronts and endure all the disabilities inflicted by the Allied economic naval blockade and still precariously revolutionarily live.

He spoke for a necessary peace, a preparatory peace, a peace of respite and return. Red cards rose up in hands all over the house to approve. Red cards rose up to disapprove. The count was had.

Not voting, 204.

Voting against ratification, 276.

Voting in favor of ratification, 724.

Russia was at peace. Russia was alone. Russia was headed for a war with the world.

Robins still sat on the steps of the platform. The count was cried through the house. It was the decision of the most populous white people in the world. It was the decision of the most innovating and upsetting of all peoples in the world. From them, through him, a question had gone to Washington, and an offer begging a response. No response came to him then. No response came to him at any time afterwards.

(To Be Continued in September Metropolitan.)

the chance offered to strike a blow at organized labor; issued his ultimatum to the striking postal workers which gave him an excuse for filling their places with returned soldiers.

As the government delivered the first blow with good effect, the police being sufficiently active and close at hand, it soon resolved on a bolder stroke. This was to summarily crush all those unions which have tired of the miserable commodity struggle and have determined to put an end to it by overthrowing the exploitation system. The O. B. U. had especially incurred governmental displeasure, and official anathema had also been pronounced on all the Socialists who openly praise the efficiency of the Soviets and point out the advantages of a Bolshevik regime. The only labor organizations which were taken under the wing of governmental protection were the old-time trade unions, the members of which spend their time in talking about indifferent reforms and in spinning fine phrases about the brotherhood of man. Indeed, the government has shown an unheard of affection for all the working men who are contented to remain hewers of wood and carriers of water under the supervision of a bourgeois boss.

The first step in this bold enterprise was the arrest of the strike-leaders. But this was only a preliminary to a general man-hunt for Socialists, revolutionists and Bolsheviks, and for documents and letters which might be used as incriminating evidence against the arrested strike-leaders. Indeed it would seem as if the government's plan to crush revolutionary labor organizations was but a veiled attempt to stamp out all revolutionary organizations. At all events the government has done its utmost to intimidate Socialists and suppress all agitation against the capitalist system. It has suppressed most revolutionary publications, and has created a police force whose special function seems to be to spy upon and hunt up class conscious and revolutionary workers. And as a climax to the reactionary activities of the Canadian Government, it was reported just the other day, that the strike-leaders were to be tried not only for what they might have said and done during the Winnipeg strike, but also for what seditious utterances they have made from 1915 to the present time. Nothing could be more reactionary than this. The government could not aim more directly at suppressing every hope and longing for more freedom, more liberty and better living conditions. Indeed, historians can now write of the democratic bourgeois government of Canada, as they do of the autocratic Czarist government of Russia, after the rebellion of 1905, that it tried to put down the rebels against its tyrannical rule with an iron hand.

Such is the bourgeois democracy, to preserve which, the world was plunged in blood and tears for four long years. It has shown so clearly that it is beyond dispute that it is a class institution, that in all disputes between capital and labor involving vital issues it will take the side of the class whose manager it is. It can not do otherwise, no more than water can prevent itself from running down hill, or the sun from giving out heat. It is only those weak sentimentalists that have a greater capacity for shouting catch phrases than for thinking that believe that a bourgeois government could or should take sides with the workers against the capitalist class.

But this belief is an empty dream, as the experience in the recent strike has proven. A capitalist government can not adapt itself to the needs of the working class. The only consistent thing the working class can do with the capitalist government is to overthrow it, and to establish in its place an administration which is under the direct control of the laboring class and which embodies its morals, its ideals and its purpose to make the earth the real home of the workers.

C. W. C.