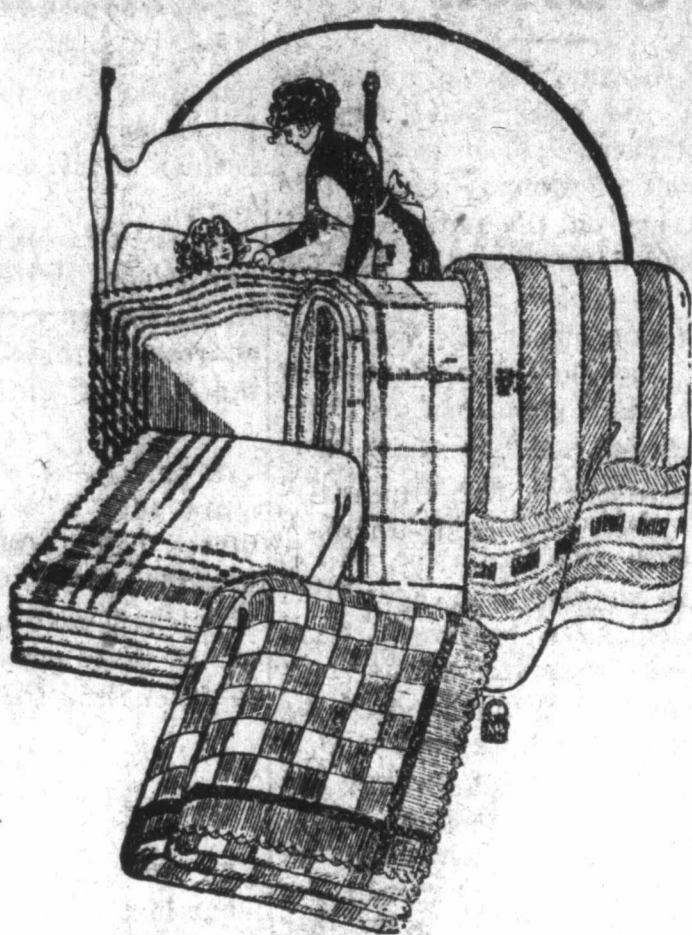


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THE ROUND TABLE

THE WAR AND ENGLISH LIFE.

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(Continued from page 4)

working conditions which it is desired to introduce as a result of this arrangement (the relaxation of trade customs and practices) and opportunity of local consultation with men or their representatives shall be given if desired." The clause was certainly an important one: and the majority of the difficulties referred to by Mr. Lloyd George in his speech appear to have been due to misunderstanding, which could have been removed by frank consultation. But it would seem nevertheless that the Union is in error in contending that it is legitimate for workmen to refuse to consent to the relaxation of trade customs where notice and opportunity for consultation have not been given, for the Treasury Agreement in which the clause occurs (printed in full in the June issue of The Round Table, pp. 575-7) is no longer authoritative, having been superseded (at any rate as regards controlled establishments) by the Munitions Act. In the Act the clause referred to reappears in Schedule 2, but in an altered form:

"Due notice shall be given to the workmen concerned whenever practicable of any changes of working conditions which it is desired to introduce as the result of the establishment becoming a controlled establishment, and opportunity for local consultation with workmen or their representatives shall be given if desired."

This unfortunate change in wording, which appears to have escaped the Union executive's notice, cuts down the right of consultation to very narrow limits, at any rate in the case of the controlled establishments, which now include 1,679 firms employing well over a million workpeople.)

Mr. Lloyd George ignored for the moment the vast amount of devoted work that has already been put out by British labour, often under the most trying conditions. Long hours, Sunday labour, bad and insufficient housing, often necessitating long journeys before and after working hours, lack of proper arrangements for meal and resttimes—in short—all the problems which physiologists sum up under the word fatigue, have been features of the work at many munition centres, and these conditions have not only tended to reduce but in too many cases permanently to impair the efficiency of the workers. In spite of the Insurance Act, poor people know far too little about the problems of personal health, although their health is, in most cases, literally their only "working capital," they too seldom

spare the time or the thought to take themselves in hand before the trouble becomes serious. Anyone who reflects over this, and knows the attraction exercised by extra work, at overtime rates, will realize the large amount of avoidable sickness, among men, women and young workers, which the

pressure of munitions work must have caused. Figures on this subject are not yet available, but enquiry shows that this surmise is only too well-founded, especially as regards the employment of women on night-shifts. ("This has, of course, hitherto been prohibited, but, like many other Factory Regulations, it has in recent months been relaxed by Administrative Order.") Thanks to the activity of the Munitions Department and of private employers and voluntary associations, working conditions are, however, now sponding rise in the spirit and morale of the workers. It still remains true that there is slackness here and obstinacy there, bad time-keeping, demarcation troubles, and the other continual small cases of friction which ought, under the Munitions Act, if Acts of Parliament could change men's motives, to have passed into limbo. These things we have always with us in our existing industrial system, based as it is rather upon self-interests and sectional advantage than upon social service. No law or tribunal can provide a specific remedy against them. For these the best remedy is, after all, example: and if all who are conscious of their country's need would carry with them, into office and workshop, the willing and good-tempered discipline which the men in the trenches have taught us to regard as characteristically English, a new and infectious spirit would spring up in our commercial and industrial life, full of promise for the difficult future.

But the real answer of the Trade Unionist, when he is taxed with not keeping his side of the bargain, is that the State has not been scrupulous about keeping the other, and it is here that the Minister of Munitions laid himself most open to attack. The State side of the bargain was threefold—firstly, the restriction of the profits of employers, so that, to quote the Minister's words, "the suspension should not work out to the enrichment of individual capitalists but entirely to the advantage of the State"; secondly, the restoration of Trade Union regulations after the war; thirdly, the State control of wages and conditions in the trades in question. "We have compulsory service for the employer," declared the Minister. "We can annex his works, we can examine his accounts, we can annex his profits, we can decide what wages he is to pay, the hours of labour, and what

the conditions should be." "You have practically taken over the whole of the engineering works of this country and controlled them by the State. I have seen resolutions passed from time to time at Trades Union Congresses about nationalizing the industries of the country. We have done it. The whole of the engineering industry of the country which is doing anything for material of war—and that is practically all—is now State controlled and the profits which they make out of the war are annexed for State purposes."

These are big words. State Socialism may be a good or bad way of carrying on armament work: in any case, the majority of the delegates being Socialistically inclined, the words certainly struck a responsive chord in them. But what are the facts, familiar to most of the audience, when they had time to think the speech over? The profits of the engineering industry are not annexed to the State. It would certainly be an unjust discrimination against other industries if they were. ("This has been tacitly admitted by the Government in making their war profits tax (from which the armaments firms are excepted) apply to all profits made during the war, not simply to profits made in consequence of the war. But it is still quite clear why one particular industry should be subject to taxation under a different system and by a different department of the State. The whole question of "limitation"—in other words, taxation—of profits in the armament industry does not seem to have been thought out beforehand by the Minister of Munitions when he pledged himself to it.) The actual arrangement that is proposed is very different. The firms are allowed to retain the whole of their average rate of profit, plus one-fifth; profits over and above that amount are "annexed to the State," subject to certain exceptions. These exceptions have since been laid down in an official paper and are—no doubt unavoidably—of a very elastic character, the owner being allowed to claim allowance from the Ministry or the referee in six specified directions and in any other matter he may care to bring forward.

The bargain with regard to the restoration of Trade Union customs is equally difficult to carry out. In actual fact the whole of British industry is being reorganized and in some cases revolutionized as a result of the war and the changes in the character of labour.

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Calgary Soldiers Tear Things Up

Attempted to Rescue Fellow Military Men From Police Station and Caused Trouble

CALGARY, Alb., Oct. 16.—A crowd of soldiers made a raid upon the mounted police barracks here to-night, with the announced intention of rescuing 5 men, members of a local battalion, who had been fined for violation of the liquor act and who, in default of payment, had been locked up. The rescue was not effected, and at the earnest representations of the officers the mob finally dispersed and went back to camp.

One soldier who tried to force his way into the guard room, was shot through the right shoulder by a mounted policeman, who was on guard there. He will recover. Another mounted policeman, who was believed to have fired the shot, was chased through the streets and was in imminent danger of being severely used had not an officer of the R.N.W.M.P. and a soldier managed to get a hearing and showed that he was not the man.

There were only a few mounted policemen at the barracks, and a section of the mob smashed all the windows and getting inside, threw a quantity of furniture, clothing and equipment into the street outside and burned it.

needed. But there is a real danger that the effect of this wonderful endowment should be marred, and the country deprived of its full benefit, by the absence of qualities, elementary in themselves but indispensable for public life, without which indeed no man can long retain the confidence of the English people—painstaking attention to detail and the exactitude which only comes from unsparing and detailed study of the matter in hand. Imagination is the spring of oratory and perhaps the greatest single gift in the make-up of a statesman; but it can also be his greatest danger unless it is ballasted by that utter sincerity which is all the more persuasive because it discards the arts of persuasion and, like all great artistic effort, aims at expressing the truth and nothing else.

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Numerous new machines are being introduced; machine tenders are replacing skilled craftsmen; processes are being improved and speeded-up; in a word the status quo ante is becoming ancient history—so much so that it is doubtful if the Trade Unions are even scheduling all the changes as they occur. All this is unavoidable. It is the way of the world. But steady-going Trade Unionists, watching what is taking place and anxious for the future when their labour will be at a discount instead of a premium, do not feel inclined to credit even Mr. Lloyd George with the powers claimed by King Canute to beat back the oncoming tide.

The third element in the bargain—the control of wages and working conditions, is perhaps even more unsatisfactory. "We can decide what wages the employer is to pay," said the Minister. The ordinary reader would gather from this that the rate of wages throughout the munitions industry would be fixed by the State, or at least that the State would make itself responsible for a fair rate being paid. Such is, however, not the case. The Munitions Department does indeed "decide" on rates of wages, but only in this sense—that the Munitions Act, whilst not empowering the Department to fix wages, forbids any change in the rate of wages or salaries in controlled establishments without its being submitted to Whitehall. The Department has, in fact, lately expressly disclaimed its intention of enforcing a fair standard of women's wages in Government work. A series of recommendations by the official Labour Supply Committee as to women's wages and conditions was recently issued through the Department, which, in a prefatory note, stated, though in obscure language, that they were only to be binding in actual Government factories, not in the controlled establishments, which employ the overwhelming majority of the women: so that it would appear as if the Ministry had washed its hands of its own Socialistic scheme for the State management of the engineering industry.

"The recommendations on women in munition work were issued from the Ministry with the following prefatory note: "The Minister has decided to adopt the Committee's recommendations as regards the Munition factories for which the Ministry is responsible, and also to commend them to the favourable consideration of other employers engaged on munition work." The ordinary reader would certainly imagine that the words in black type referred to controlled establishments, and Mrs. Pankhurst, for instance, jumped to this conclusion. But this is not so. The true state of affairs was made clear in The Manchester Guardian, which, in correcting Mrs. Pankhurst, stated: "The recommendations are not obligatory in controlled private establishments. They will be carried out in all Government-owned munition works like Woolwich and the new shell factories, and it is hoped and expected that they will be adopted by private firms." Thus the "State-controlled factories" of the Congress have now become "private firms," for which the Ministry of Munitions is not responsible. It should be added that the prefatory note to the recommendations would actually seem to be a retrograde step, since it runs counter to the spirit of the Fair Wages clause, the observance of which has hitherto been an accepted principle in Government contracts. — It seems desirable to go into these details at some length because they concern matters which are in the minds of thousands of common people with whom many of the newspaper readers who drew their conclusions from the famous Trade Union Congress speech have no opportunity of establishing contract. If the question at issue seem paltry and the differences trivial in view of the world situation, the principle underlying them is not. Workpeople may be foolish, shortsighted, and unimaginative, but they have a high standard of truth and candour any they are angry when they find that they have been misled. The difficult problems to which Labour, Capital and the State are parties can only be solved on a basis of mutual understanding and mutual confidence; and action on any side which tends to undermine confidence and to create suspicion and bitterness strikes at the foundations of national unity. Mr. Lloyd George, with his extraordinary combination of natural gifts, his eloquence, his sympathetic imagination, his organized ability and "drive," his intense and unfeigned love for freedom, and hatred of oppression, is one of the country's greatest assets in this hour of