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Cotton's Weekly

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GLASS WAR AT SPRINGHILL

The Capitalist Courts Invoked to Protect the Slave Rights of a Master Class

(By Roscoe A. Fillmore our Special Correspondent on the scene.)

FOR the past ten months a struggle has been carried on in Springhill between the Cumberland Railway and Coal Company on the one hand and the United Mine Workers of America on the other. Of course this is merely an effort on the part of the local miners to keep up the price of their labor power but is a very vital fight for them as they were being steadily forced to accept a lower and lower standard and finally when an effort was made to enforce a fifteen per cent reduction in the wage scale the fight was on.

The company steadily lost ground. They imported scab labor and have tried with very slight success to run the mines. But the scabs left as fast as others came. The scabs have been housed in stables adjoining the colliery and are surrounded by a high stockade. At times the strikers have been successful in taking large bunches of men from the mine. On one occasion forty-two were induced to quit at once.

Suffering from reverses in their efforts to obtain scabs and being desirous of preventing the strikers from talking to and reasoning with those who were coming in to work, the company sought means to break up the system of picketing which the men had made use of. So being class conscious and thoroughly alive to their own interests and knowing that all government and its various branches—parliaments, courts, police, and military are the property of their class the company went before one of these courts and declared that the strikers were injuring their (the company's) business and occasioning them huge losses. Ever desirous of licking the shoes of those who pay their fat salaries, the court immediately, May 14th, issued an injunction restraining the United Mine Workers from talking to or in any way interfering with the employees of the company. The injunction was returnable before Justice Drysdale of Halifax on May 26th when the case was to be argued and a decision given as to whether the order should be made permanent. W. R. Toben of Glace Bay appeared for the U. M. W. on the date set. The Justice reserved his decision and in fact up to date there has been no decision in the case. Sixteen men were served with the restraining order. They were C. A. Bonnyman, Wm. Watkins, J. B. Moss, Calvin M. Ward, Cornelius Kellahar, Henry Perrin, David Colwell, Arthur Rae, Angus Mullan, David Ross, Milton Cameron, Archibald Terris, John McDonald, Chas. Jewkes, Jules Lavenne and Kent Foster of Springhill. Three Glace Bay men—Dan McDougall, James D. McLachlan and J. B. McLennan were also served with injunctions.

In spite of the injunctions the men continued to picket the colliery, in fact were more active than before. Exasperated by the sight of strikers patrolling the street around the plant Mr. Cowans decided to make a test case. Comrade Jules Lavenne being a particularly active striker and Socialist was chosen for the victim. About this time Lavenne had been instrumental in persuading about 40 German miners to quit and the officials were particularly spiteful towards him. In my opinion, formed from interviews with Lavenne and a large number of other Comrades, this was the whole reason that Lavenne was singled out to be victimized. Of course this is immaterial. It matters nought who the victim is. He is a worker—a member of the international working class and as such we workers must do our duty to our class by supporting him in every possible way.

The company secured a number of affidavits to the effect that Lavenne had interfered with strike-breakers and, armed with these, Hector McInnes, of the firm of Mellish & McInnes of Halifax, the Company's attorney, demanded that a warrant be issued for Lavenne for contempt of court. The hearing was set for June 17th, in Halifax. Mr. W. R. Toben the strikers' attorney appeared for Lavenne. Justice Drysdale after hearing argument decided that he could not render a decision in the matter until the first case, that over the issuance of a permanent injunction,

fully, but they have several times been seen aiding their husbands and brothers in picketing. Many of them are as well grounded in Socialism as the men and just as fearless in propagating it. They are beginning to realize that they are a part of the working class and that they can never be freed from their degrading position as the slaves of a wage slave until the workers take the earth and the fullness thereof for themselves, thus establishing economic liberty (the only liberty that can exist by the way) for all.

This morning (June 18) I accompanied Comrade Terris to the colliery for the purpose of helping picket the plant. Although it was only a few minutes after six when we arrived, yet quite a number had already gathered and were patrolling the streets. About seventy in all were on hand for the work. About twenty-five of the fifty or sixty thugs and gun men in the employ of the company were on hand for the purpose of aweing the men. These thugs were heavily armed, being provided with Colts .44 calibre revolvers and several of them carried clubs of the regulation kind besides. Some of them were so bold as to carry the revolvers well in sight, one fellow I particularly noticed who carried a gun in his vest pocket. I have not yet ascertained whether these thugs are all properly sworn in as special constables or not or whether they are merely the police of the company and as such possessed of no legal right to carry weapons. But whether they possess this legal

right or not, is not our business. We must learn well the lesson that we need—that the laws belong to the capitalists and it is not likely they will enforce them against their own henchmen. One fact that has impressed me and given me a—shall I say shock?—of surprise is the prevalence of red buttons on the coats of the strikers. They seem to have adopted this as their strike badge. Probably 500 are worn now, and from talking with the wearers I have concluded that the most of them know mighty well what that red means too, and just why they are wearing them. When the Lavenne case comes up in Halifax next week I will be on hand and will endeavor to report the proceedings from the standpoint of a revolutionist—a clear cut Socialist workman. And I want readers of Cotton's to carefully read the facts that I will lay before them as clearly as possible. This is not merely a fight based upon the demand of the United Mine Workers for a larger price for their labor power. The men who are being shackled by the capitalist courts are clear cut reds and I believe the cases will do much towards opening the eyes of the workers everywhere to the colossal skin game (with themselves as the victims) that has been and is today being perpetrated upon them. Their eyes once opened to this, who shall say them nay when they take, through use of their political power, the earth, and produce an abundance of the good things of life for all?

JULES LAVENNE

Down at Springhill, Nova Scotia, is developing a character which will yet make history in Canada. The man is Jules Lavenne who has inscribed upon his oriflamme of war the motto, "No truce nor rest till the Socialist Revolution is here."

The fight at Springhill between the miners and the company has been long and bitter. Jules Lavenne has been in the forefront of the fight on behalf of the miners. And he has been picked as the victim of the wrath of the Company.

The courts of Canada are the instruments of enforcing the capitalist law of Canada. They are picked from among successful capitalist lawyers. As such their whole mental outlook is twisted by property rights. If their mental outlook were not twisted they would not be judges.

The Cumberland Coal Company is in trouble with its men. It wants to pay them starvation wages. The men strike. Scabs are imported and housed in the Company bull pens. Lavenne and other Socialists endeavor to persuade the scabs to quit being scabs and do persuade some of them to leave their employment.

The Company officials run to one of the Canadian judges, one of those creatures whose minds have been twisted and warped by long practise in the chicaneries of the slave laws of Canada. The Company officials get an injunction against sixteen of the strikers preventing them from speaking to or in any way interfering with the strike breakers. The Company will suffer great loss if the strike breakers are interfered with. The strike breakers may be persuaded to quit scabbing and the strikers may win. The strikers may force the Company to give decent wages so that the wives and children of the toilers of Springhill may be a little better cared for. Humanity would sweep upward if the wives and little ones were better cared for. But that would cause "irreparable injury" to the parasite mineowners for their dividends would be reduced. The judge issues an injunction restraining the strikers from trying to persuade the strike breakers to stand with their class. The injunction is temporary. That is to say the injunction may be reversed when the facts of the case are decided by testimony as to the true facts of the case in open court. Until the evidence is heard the miners are restrained from interfering with the strike breakers. This shows how the capitalist laws are run in the interests of the bosses. The strikers gave been striking for months. No injunction was issued. The plant has been shut down for months. Now the Company imports scabs and lest the scabs quit, the courts are invoked to keep the scabs' minds from being contaminated with conversation with their fellow workers whose jobs they are taking. Lavenne refused to obey the injunction. As he says himself the courts did not enjoin the Company from employing scabs. Therefore it was unjust to prevent the strike breakers from persuading the scabs to strike, and when courts of justice become unjust it is the duty of just men to refuse to obey the unjust courts. Lavenne refused to obey the order. He picketed. He was therefore guilty of contempt of court. Contempt of court is one of those nebulous, undefined offenses for which no stated penalty is fixed. Contempt of court is very elastic and it practically lies within the power of the judge to do what he likes with the prisoner. Lavenne has proved his mettle. In the class struggle he dares take his stand with his expropriated brethren and face the consequences. The heart of every Socialist will beat faster with pride at the story of Lavenne. Canadian Socialism is proving itself not unworthy in the clashing of the class struggle.

Roosevelt lectured Great Britain upon her policy in Egypt and many of the Britishers got provoked. Egypt is a touchy question just now with the plunderers. The Egyptians are not contented to work hard for the benefit of foreign bondholders and capitalists. There is a spirit of revolt in Egypt, and the master class of Great Britain fear for their revenues. The evolution of industry combined with political action on the part of the working classes will squeeze the plunder from the capitalists. Freedom, as defined by the capitalist, means license for himself and slavery for his employees. The state crowning for Edward has cost the British government a million and a half dollars. More plunder for the parasites.

"NO TRUCE NOR REST"

Jules Lavenne Declares "If I am Tried and Convicted of Contempt I will go to Jail as I Believe it is my Duty to my Class."

(By Roscoe A. Fillmore, Special correspondent.)

TO DAY (June 18) I interviewed Comrade Jules Lavenne the victim of the latest move by the Coal Company. Comrade Lavenne was born in Belgium and at the early age of 11 years he carried the red flag in numerous working class demonstrations. So revolt was bred in the bone in his case. About six years ago he came to "this glorious Canada of ours." He finally located in Springhill and became a wage slave for the Cumberland Railway and Coal Company. He was by no means a willing slave however and always kept the red flag flying as is proven by the fact that there are hundreds of men in revolt at present who were leavened by the work of Lavenne. The following expresses his position in this fight in which he is one of the principals. "I did not obey the injunction because no injunction was issued restraining the company from bringing in scabs. As a member of the United Mine Workers and a striker, it was in my interests to keep the scabs out, and as a Socialist I could not compromise with the capitalist courts in this way. My motto is "No Truce." If it is proper for the company to fetch in scabs it is just as proper for me, acting in my economic interests as a worker to endeavor to keep them out. If it is not legal for me to do so—well—then our contention that all law is against the workers and in fact just a mill stone about their necks, is well borne out. "I believe this is a plot, as I have several times been threatened by officials and thugs of the company. I have been told—"We'll fix you." "We'll have you behind the bars." "We've got you spotted," etc. I intend to fight this out on the basis of the class struggle. I do not want to be cleared on legal technicalities because I want to show the workers that the courts, governments, military and police forces, etc., are parts of a structure built for the sole purpose of keeping them in subjection and that, as the capitalist owns and makes the law and interprets it in his interests as is material, we as workers have nothing to hope from their judges and courts but the cold shoulder. The time has come when we must fight and not think of such a thing as truce. Our lives depend upon it. We must conquer and the sooner we fight and the hotter we fight the sooner peace. We must do our best to abolish wage slavery and that soon. The C. Ry & Co. are anarchists as are all capitalists. They are lawless. They or their thugs have supplied foreigners who speak no English with revolvers."

Here Lavenne presented me with a loaded cartridge, Calibre .44, taken from one of the scabs and informed me that he had the revolver at home. He then continued—"These foreigners have been told that they will be killed by strikers if they leave the pen and thus aroused to the pitch where they will use the guns at the slightest provocation. We got about 40 of them out of the pen by singing the Marseillaise and International in front of the boarding house. When they saw our colors and heard the working class songs they then concluded that they couldn't remain at work and thus help to cut the throats of their Comrades and they walked out like men. I want to emphasize this fact because it proves that our movement is international and that we of the working class recognize no divisions of race or color. They told us that the Dominion Coal Company brought them from Germany under false pretenses. When they reached Cape Breton the strike had been settled and they were turned over to the Cumberland Railway and Coal Company like cattle or sheep. As they believed in the motto "Workers of the world, unite!" they had done in Canada what they would have done in Germany—their duty to their class. "If the warrant is issued and I am tried and convicted of contempt I will go to jail as I believe it is my duty to my class. The act of which I am accused was of use to myself and my class and I did it to the detriment of the capitalist class."

Comrade Lavenne is not posing as a martyr in this case. He is an uncompromising Socialist who has always stood for his class not from any philanthropic motive—not from altruism—but simply because he knows he himself must live under the dominance of Capital so long as the workers remain asleep. It is therefore in his interests to arouse them, and by doing so attain economic liberty himself. He believes his present course in this matter will help—hence his position.

THE DOG FIGHT

There is a story of a tenderfoot parson out west who asked Alkali Ike the best way he could suggest for getting the gentlemen of the town to attend divine service which he proposed to hold the following Sunday. "Well, Parson," suggested Ike, "The best way to draw a crowd is to have a dog fight to start off with."

It is getting near time for Cotton's Weekly to begin the dog fight against capitalism in Canada. There was a little paper out west, called the Pentecost Press which published an editorial on the death of King Edward. The editorial was mild compared to Cotton's King Edward issue. But the Pentecost Press had a small circulation. It's readers did not back it up. It insulted the grand fetish of the British Empire. Therefore Bowser, the Attorney General of British Columbia got busy and deprived the editor of a little office he held. Had the editorial been stronger the paper would probably have been denied the use of the mails. Cotton's was not touched. Cotton's has a circulation verging on the ten thousand and its readers are prepared to back it.

In Germany, in France, in Egypt, in Mexico and in the United States a free press is denied. In Canada a free press is also denied. In Vancouver, if I remember right, an Indian paper published against British rule in India was suppressed by the Canadian authorities. The strings were pulled from London and the Canadian officials jumped the Indian paper. Canada has not a free press. Cotton's Weekly has not yet been forbidden the mails. It has only been hampered it its circulation a little. The reason why an attempt has not been made to suppress it is because Cotton's has not yet begun its dog fight in earnest against capitalist corruption in power in Canada.

A puppy is a fool puppy that will tackle a big dog before it gains its dog strength. Cotton's Weekly would have been foolish to jump in and tackle the system where it hurts the capitalists when it had but a small circulation and no power. Cotton's Weekly had to mew its mighty youth. The capitalists and politicians of Canada do not fear weakness. They fear power. Cotton's is getting that power.

At Ottawa Lemieux has felt the power back of the paper. Hundreds of letters of protest have made the postal officials sit up and take notice. They have felt the might of Cotton's army and know that no underhanded work will be tolerated by the revolutionaries of the Dominion. The dog fight may begin pretty soon. The circulation is getting big enough to warrant it.

Next week's issue, if everything goes right, will be a "Contempt of Court Issue." This will be the first bark in the dog fight. There are many persons who sneer at Socialism. These are the little capitalists, the men who run around like mice in an old barn and get their living by picking up neglected grains of wheat and petty contracts. Such men never think that the capitalist system may be pulled down just as the mice never think that the old barn is not a permanent institution for their special use. But the big financiers, the men who handle millions and make money by becoming the lords of the people's representatives, these men know the menace of Socialism. They have the ear to the ground and they hear the coming rumblings of the revolution.