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Strikes---Government and People

Postmen's and Other Strikes Symptoms of Disease Striking at the Existing Order.—Need of Unification of Labor Interests and Sense of their Responsibilities.

For the past two weeks from Winnipeg to Victoria business has been seriously interfered with and the public greatly inconvenienced by the strike of the postmen and a complete stoppage of the mail service. Strikes have come and gone but we have always believed that, come what may, the mails would go on uninterruptedly. The public generally believed that the government mail service was immune from strikes, but the present interruption is a rude reminder to the contrary. Apparently, the cause of the trouble and the issue at present is not for increased wages, nor for different conditions of work, but is simply that the Dominion government delegate its powers to a board of conciliation having power to act in the settlement of the misunderstanding, if nothing else, between the Government and its mail service employees. The immediate cause for the walking out of the mail carriers was the failure of the government to forward cheques to their employees, being increases in salary, bonuses, and allowances granted at the last session of the Dominion parliament. Although the government is to be blamed for its dilatory action in this regard, the government has agreed to forward cheques immediately, and it was thought that the strike was at an end. This was the view of the postmen in the east, who have already gone back to work after being out only for a few days. The Union of postal employees seems to lack cohesiveness for the executive head on behalf of the union accepted the government's decision and ordered all members to return to work. From Winnipeg west, however, the union members refused to obey their Dominion executive and persist in remaining out. This despite the fact that all postmen west of the Great Lakes received a bonus of \$100 extra per year for increased cost of living. Concerning the claim for a conciliation board the government refused to delegate this power regarding itself as its own board of arbitration and pointing out that the relations of the government and its employees are not the relations of private em-

ployer and employee. The government has, however, made the concession that it will appoint a committee of the cabinet to sit on the grievances of the postal service and report back to the government for action. This seems to be just as unacceptable to the men as though nothing were done.

The labour unions of the west are taking a keen interest in the struggle and as we go to press are threatening to call out all unions in sympathy, thus attempting to put an entire stop to the business of the country.

This present issue is undoubtedly the most wide-spread and determined effort to paralyze the industry of the nation. The present situation is ugly and menacing and its future is fraught with greater gravity than any labor disturbance that has occurred in the past. The business of Canada stands today, if the present signs of the times in the West are any indication, upon the brink of a volcano which if not taken in hand will blow up with an outpouring of Bolshevism only less in degree and extent than now obtains in Russia.

The labor interests in the affected territory are acting as though no war were in existence, as though civilization were not in a struggle where it must fight for its life or be sunk in Prussian barbarism, as though the critical days of this gigantic struggle were not taking place and that from the result of these days will issue forth security and peace or bondage and misery. We are living in heroic days. Future generations will properly appraise them, will comprehend their true peril and correctly weigh their tremendous issues at stake.

Civilization is being called upon for the sacrifice of self interest and life blood; yet away from the actual scene of the struggle, but not away from the actual play of economic forces which are waging this war, labor is seeking to drive the hardest bargain possible and wring from industry the last penny, yet with the proceeds of those wages indulging in extravagance and luxury. No matter what the immediate object may be, the labor unions are playing into the hands of the enemy. While the labor interests are perhaps as patriotic as the general business interests of the country, they certainly are being badly advised and badly led and are in reality innocent dupes of Prussianism. A few weeks

" In times of war we do well to remember the wise expression of old Diogenes, who said:

"How many things there are in the world that Diogenes can do without."

"That applies to the life of the individual as well as the community as a whole. The people of the United States who stand ready to give their all to win this war will cheerfully forego unnecessary comforts and luxuries when once they fully grasp the real significance of economy in this emergency. If up till now they have not yet begun to do their full duty in saving, it is only because they have not had it sufficiently impressed upon their minds that saving is not a small and petty matter but that there is glory in saving, that saving has an immediate bearing upon the question of victory and defeat and of life and death, and that at this time it is the biggest contribution the civilian population can make. We must train ourselves to visualize the cumulative result of individual and communal thrift in the light of which the smallest contribution assumes its true importance."

Extract from address of Paul M. Warburg, Vice-Governor of Federal Reserve Board, Washington, D. C.