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Planning the New Social Order

The Parliament of the Building Industry in Great Britain.

"The only people who can put industry right are the people—workers by hand and brain—who carry it on." Such was the burden of the message of Mr. Malcolm Sparkes of the Industrial Council of the Building Industry, in his address, the last of the series of lunch-hour addresses arranged at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, by the British League of Faith and Labor, on June 25th.

The audience was obviously intensely gripped whilst, in simple but eloquent language, Mr. Sparkes unfolded the drama of the inauguration of the Parliament of the Building Industry, an experiment in Industrial Reconstruction that promises to revolutionize the second largest, and one of the most important, of our stable industries. The main function of the Building Trades Parliament was definitely to help the building of a new Social Order. It was composed of representatives of the whole of the Trade Unions and Employers' Associations in the industry, which sent 122 representatives in equal numbers. It was the parent of the Whitley Councils, but there were such essential differences, that the Councils only bore a very faint resemblance to their parent. The differences were first that the B.T.P. was essentially a Labor scheme, brought forward by the Trade unions, and accepted by the Employers' Association on its merits. Secondly, it was frankly based on idealism. The constitution opened with a statement that the scheme was the expression of a desire on the part of workers and employers to render their full share of service towards the creation of a new and better industrial order. The Whitley Councils had buried the idealism. They proposed merely to create permanent improvement in the relations between employers and employees. "Was that the reason why the B.T.P. had been accepted by the second largest industry in the country, whilst the Whitley Councils had been turned down by all the Trade Unions in other well-organized industries? The B.T.P. did not set out to secure industrial peace. It realized that this would come, and could only come, not as a result of balance of power with a Supreme Court of Appeal in the background, but as a by-product resulting from a scheme well-planned on the sound foundations of confidence, justice, and goodwill. Another unique feature was that the B.T.P. takes its decisions from a majority of its Council of representatives, instead of insisting on a majority on both sides. It excluded dipping from its programme, and would not act

as an arbitrator, because it desired to keep the atmosphere of its meetings clear for its own special work. The Parliament was to be the clearing house for idealists. For the first time in industrial history, we had a vital industry trying to find its own house in order. The root problem of industrial unrest was the question of control in industry. Why should control not be in the hands of the people who carried on the industry, rather than in the hands of property owners? The B.T.P. had been brought up against this fundamental problem immediately by one of its committees, which had set out to discuss the question of scientific management. They had realized that before any good could come from this line of enquiry, the whole structure of industry must be reviewed. The workers were not prepared to be scientifically managed under the existing system of capitalist ownership and control. The result was an interim report of first importance, which emphasized the importance of cultivating the "team spirit" in industry, where all engaged therein should pull together in the spirit of common service to the community. Instead of, as at present, each section pulling for its own end. The proposals of its committee, briefly stated were: (i) The abolition of the fear of unemployment by means of a central fund carried by the whole industry, and administered by the trade unions for the benefit of all registered workers in the industry; (ii) The abolition of the capitalist (please do not confuse with capital), as controller. Capital was to be "hired," and interest guaranteed, so that the industry, and not the capitalist, should "carry the risk"; (iii) Employers were to become salaried officials of the industry as a whole; (iv) Surplus profits were to be utilized for the improvement of the industry, as a means of service to the community.

The indirect outcome of this report had resulted in the formation of the Manchester and London Building Guilds, and with a further report expected from the committee in August, it was anticipated that a National Building Guild would result, binding all grades of workers in the industry into a single organization, with service to the community as its basic ideal.—F. G. in The Challenger.

Coal miners in South Wales have recently received wage increases as follows: The highest paid day wage men, a minimum weekly wage \$7 per cent. higher than they had before the war; for the medium-paid, underground, day wage men an increase of 14 per cent, and for the lowest-paid day wage men an increase of 20 per cent.

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RUSSIAN TRADE UNIONISTS HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON WITH GOVT.

The Estonian Social-Democratic party (the Trade Union party) has received the following declaration from the Social-Democrats of Petrograd, brought secretly to them for publication: "Russia is drenched in blood. The Communist Government has destroyed all social and industrial life, tramples personality into the dust, and has already annihilated the best intellectual power of the land. To foreign nations the Bolsheviks pretend to be representatives of the workers and peasants, but they trick the masses of the people and give promises only that they may keep themselves in power. Only through shameless methods of violence do they remain in control, and every day their real hatred against the laboring men becomes more apparent. Through many improvements our Social-Democratic organization is being destroyed, and the methods are like those of the Czar. Spies are everywhere, and many Trade Unionists are continually brought to trial. We, the workers, representing fourteen factories of Petrograd and the Trade Unionists of Petrograd, protest loudly against this challenge to the whole of the working class of Russia. We have nothing in common with the Government of violence and murder, and we pledge ourselves to use every means that this report shall reach across our frontiers to comrades in other countries."

FARMER-LABOR PARTIES AGREE.

The U.F.O. and the Independent Labor party have reached an agreement to unite for political action in constituencies which are urban and rural. The delegates to make the selection of candidates will be chosen from each body, and the proportion of delegates sent by each will be decided at conferences of local executives within the riding.

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