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Freedom of Speech and Assembly or Thug Rule

The petitions and resolutions demanding freedom of speech and assembly which have been sent from all parts of Canada to Ottawa have so far elicited but one reply—a more drastic application of thug rule.

Socialist meetings are not forbidden, but a few paid agents agitate amongst the returned soldiers and by insidious lies and gross misrepresentations incite a number of them to create disturbances, thereby making it extremely difficult to hold such meetings.

An instance of especially disgusting character was the attempt to precipitate a riot at a Socialist meeting held at the Orpheum Theatre, Edmonton, Sunday, February 9th. The individual responsible in this case was T. Dace, a member of the G. W. V. A., Edmonton—and I understand, a one time member of its executive committee, who now has a position on the land settlement commission. His actions suggest the thought that he is not in the Association to advance the interests of the returned men, but to divide them, and use those he can fool to accomplish the wishes of the despots to whom Dace looks for his meal ticket. A London Jew ready to do anything for thirty pieces of silver.

The returned boys in Edmonton are not easily led, this being well evidenced when a few weeks ago Dace did all in his power to disturb a meeting held in the Empire Theatre, at which Mr. George Paton, a well-known Albertan farmer, was speaking with Mr. Knight as chairman. Question after question was put and answered to the satisfaction of all but Dace, who tried by haranguing those around him to raise a racket; only desisting when it dawned upon him that he was alone, in fact the many veterans present highly enjoyed his discomfiture.

The attempt on the 9th inst. was more successful. Half an hour before the meeting started trouble was announced from three rows of young hoodlums from the University, who, as it later developed, were the advance guard. At 8 p.m. from the Veterans headquarters, where a special meeting had just concluded, many came trooping in, directed to their seats by the crooked finger of Chief Mobman Dace. Major Stafford was noticeable amongst them, who, of course displayed the manners of an officer and a gentleman. "I don't think."

Mrs. Knight was the speaker and she pluckily began her address, and only those present can appreciate the tact with which she handled an extremely delicate situation. At the conclusion of the address, the chairman called for the collection, stating that afterwards questions would be in order. Hardly had the chairman ceased speaking when up jumped the gallant Major Stafford and in pompous tones declared that it had been circulated around town that the Socialists were disloyal, and to prove that it was not so, would they conclude the meeting by singing "God Save the King." The chairman got up to explain that the meeting was not over, that there was yet questions and discussion, but while he was still speaking the gallants rose to their feet and started the singing. The audience with few exceptions rose to their feet, not mark you, in respect, but to leave the Agents Provoceur no possible excuse for their barbarian behavior. During the singing a red-headed but well-dressed ruffian was running up and down the aisles hunting out those who kept their seats; most of the offenders being women he got a much hotter reception than he bargained for. An incident which was rather significant took place quite near me. Dace seeing a man who looked very weak and ill sitting defiantly in his chair seized him and attempted to force him to his feet. With an ironic scowl the man turned the lapel of his coat and revealed a returned veteran's button. The cowardly Dace literally turned yellow. Directly the self-imposed choir had finished their dismal dirge, the audience seated themselves and a few questions were asked and

answered and the meeting closed. The splendid self-control of the audience alone saved the situation. The action of both Dace and Major Stafford indelibly stamp them as mean, contemptible Agents Provoceur.

The mists are clearing, however, and the time is not far distant when the workers, whether in uniform or in overalls, will know that their only hope lies in the Co-operative Commonwealth, and identical with that of the Socialists. Speed the day.

Leaving the meeting I hid me to my lonely shack and to take my mind from the events of the evening, I commenced reading the eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, but every line I read stamped the significance of what I had witnessed deeper into my mind. Page after page related how Louis Napoleon, when President in 1849, organized his notorious society of December 10th, and by their aid seized the Imperial throne of France. Over ten thousand of the dregs of society were secretly paid by him to applaud his very appearance and by their thug methods to break up every counter-demonstration, while the police looked on or when necessary assisted. While posing before the world as the Savior of Society; the Champion of Law and Order; of the rights of poverty, of family and religion, ten thousand thugs were paid by him to club their position into silence; to break up the club rooms and destroy the property of the working-class associations, and to disrupt their meetings.

Today the "powers that be" are more crafty than Louis Napoleon, and it is not necessary to pay ten thousand thugs. With the devilish cunning of a long experience in fooling and ruling the working-class, they raise a number of false issues upon which the workers divide and it is these fatal divisions that render the hosts of the working-class so impotent. The tremendous problem facing humanity today is the rapidly increasing army of unemployed, due to much improved productive machinery and the condition greatly accentuated by the demobilization of the army. Should the returned soldiers combine with their fellow-workers in overalls the doom of capitalism is sealed, consequently this contingency must be prevented at all costs. No, no, gentle reader, not by paying an army of ten thousand but by employing a few agents in each organization to play on the credulity of the members, to worm themselves into their confidence, to poison their minds against others of their own class, and in the end to betray them to their employers—the Master Class.

The irony of the past history of workers is that they only became aware of the traitors after the betrayal, but today events move in such rapid succession that the lie is discovered before it has time to do much damage, and woe to the traitor discovered.

Many thousands of the returned soldiers are today conscious that their only hope is the Co-operative Commonwealth. They are not to be purchased or led by such as Dace or the brave Major Stafford and tomorrow those that have been deceived and led will require an accounting. Then woe to Agents Provoceur and political pimps.

In conclusion I would draw the attention of the working class to three thoughts:

First—A government job, without exception, compels allegiance to the political machine.

Second—The working class have nothing; therefore it is foolish to fight each other, as nothing can be gained, and

Third—If they would solidly combine, they can possess the world, as the owners of it are an insignificant few in comparison to their vast numbers.