

INDUSTRIAL SLAVERY IN SCOTLAND

Blacklegging By German Prisoners.

Part I.—RESULTS OF AN INQUIRY.

The Island of Raasay, off the West Coast of Scotland, is in the County of Inverness, represented in the House of Commons by Mr. T. B. Morison, Solicitor-General for Scotland. The landlords of the island are Messrs. Baird, Ironfounders, of Glasgow, whose name suggests much to Scottish workers.

On December 2nd, 1916, a resolution protesting against the displacement of local workers by German prisoners was sent to the present Prime Minister and the then Secretary for Scotland, by the Highland Land League. Securing no response to this, on February 1st, 1917, an appeal in the matter was sent to certain labor organizations. Resolutions of protest were thereupon passed by different Trades and Labor Councils and sent to the Government and others concerned.

On February 10th, 1917, the Solicitor-General for Scotland intimated to the Highland Land League that he "had made inquiry into the matter and was informed the statements communicated to him were in many respects inaccurate and exaggerated." On March 3rd he gave as the source of this information the name of a political supporter in Portree. On February 24th, 1917, the Solicitor-General, as the result of further correspondence, consented to visit Raasay and meet those with complaints. On February 26th and 27th by letter and telegrams a meeting of the Raasay workers and the Solicitor-General was arranged for Saturday afternoon, March 3rd, 1917.

The matter was meantime raised in the Press and, ultimately, on February 22nd, 1917, in the House of Commons by Mr. Wilkie, M.P. for Dundee. In his reply Mr. Kellaway, speaking for the Secretary for Scotland, said "the iron-ore mines in Raasay are worked by a firm acting as agents for the Ministry of Munitions." Further in the course of his reply Mr. Kellaway said—"the ordinary laborers are paid 5/- a day, but those with more skill are paid at a higher rate. No person belonging to the islands has been displaced by German labor. . . . The suggestion that the introduction of German prisoners has been used to beat down the wages of the men of the island is entirely without foundation." The value of these statements may be ascertained by perusing the evidence then available, in the hands of the Highland Land League, and given subsequently in public before the Solicitor-General and others at Raasay.

On the arrival of the Hon. Secretary of the Highland Land League at Raasay, on March 2nd, he found a notice on the local Post Office issued on behalf of the Solicitor-General, calling the meeting for 10 o'clock the following morning. This was done without any intimation to him by the Solicitor-General of the change of time.

Shortly before the time stated the Solicitor-General, and a party which included the Acting-Procurator-Fiscal of Portree and the Liberal agent for Inverness, came to the Island in an Admiralty vessel.

As soon as the workers at the mines were apprised of the time and date of the inquiry they applied to the Management of the mines for permission to attend and give evidence. They were curtly refused permission. At 9 o'clock on the morning of the inquiry the Chairman, Secretary and Delegate of the Raasay Miners' and Workers' Union, waited on Mr. Munro,

Messrs. Bairds' Manager on the island, and asked that men wishing to give evidence at the inquiry might be given sufficient time off work to do so. This request was also refused. The entire work at the mines had a week or two previously been stopped for an afternoon while a German prisoner was buried.

Shortly after 10 o'clock an inquiry into the islanders' grievances was opened in the local school-house. Mr. Alexander Gillies was chosen by vote as Chairman. Messrs. Wm. Macrae (President), John M. Macleod (Secretary), and G. J. Bruce (Delegate) appeared for the Raasay Miners' and Workers' Union, the latter also representing the Highland Land League. Mr. Munro (Manager and Factor) watched proceedings for Messrs. Baird, and the Solicitor-General, Mr. T. B. Morison, took up the cross-examination of witnesses.

Mr. Bruce complained at the outset of being handicapped by the management's refusal to let many important witnesses attend; and wished it noted that a statement had been made to the prejudice of the complainants by the Government in Parliament without the Government making any inquiry from them.

Mr. Morison said that he accepted no responsibility for what had been said or done in the House of Commons in the matter, and came entirely on his own initiative to hear any grievances the islanders had to ventilate.

The hearing of evidence was then proceeded with. Subjoined is a condensed report of this, giving the main points of the testimony with numbers, not in the order they were called, for the witnesses' names. Each witness, however, gave his name, age, calling, and such other personal particulars as were required. Mr. Bruce led evidence for the complainants, and each witness was subjected to a rigid cross-examination by Mr. Morison. While Witness No. 2 was being cross-examined, Mr. Bruce objected to what he termed Mr. Morison's bullying, and wished the Solicitor-General to remember that these islanders were honest men and not criminals in the dock. Mr. Morison disclaimed the idea of bullying any witness, and asked the witness if he were bullying him. The witness replied he "would leave that for others to say!" Later on, Mr. Bruce, who had repeatedly protested against questions by Mr. Morison which he asserted were unfair, remarked that Mr. Morison's hostile attitude would lead one to suppose he represented Bairds there. Mr. Morison angrily resented the remark, and a brisk passage-at-arms resulted in Mr. Morison asking if there were a man present who agreed with Mr. Bruce's remark he should stand up. Almost the entire audience rose to its feet, many shouting and angrily asking who did Mr. Morison represent? Mr. Munro, Bairds' Manager, clamored for the names of all standing to be taken, and was proceeding to take them when Mr. Bruce advised the men to sit down and refuse their names. They were past the days, he observed, of landlord bounce and intimidation. The men sat down and refused their names.

Mr. Morison was proceeding to pack up and leave, saying that after what had occurred he could not go on further. He emphasized that he not only did not represent Messrs. Baird, but had no communication with them, and did not know a member of the firm. He would only remain on condition that this was accepted, and the meeting's declaration was unconditionally withdrawn. On the suggestion of Mr. Bruce, Mr. Morison's disclaimer was accepted, and what hurt his feelings

was withdrawn, and the inquiry proceeded.

After the mid-day adjournment, Mr. Mackinnon, Acting-Fiscal of Portree, acted as Gaelic interpreter, as a number of witnesses preferred to give their evidence in the language with which they were most familiar.

During the afternoon Messrs. Baird interpolated witnesses who had to leave for their work, and Mr. Morison wished to hear the evidence of Mr. Munro, Messrs. Bairds' Manager, at that stage, but Mr. Bruce objecting till his witnesses had been heard, Mr. Morison was over-ruled, and the complainants' evidence was continued.

Witness 1.—I am an engine man. I have been about two years in Messrs. Bairds' employ. When I started working at the mines I was paid 18/- a week. I always grumbled for more wages. At the latter end of June, 1916, I told the foreman I could not continue to work for the small wages given me. He replied "I'll report you. You'll either work here or go to France." I was taken before the Manager and repeated my complaint. He told the foreman to "get another man in this man's place." I got no pay for that week. I was working in the mine for a short period on £1 a week. I refused to work on Sunday. My place was taken by a German prisoner. I could get no other suitable work on the island and applied about a week after to be taken on again. I continually applied for more wages. For the month of February, 1917, I was paid at the rate of 26/- a week, including war bonus. This was since the matter was made public. I work nine hours a day for Bairds. I do other work in my own time.

Witness 2.—I am a worker at the mines in Raasay. I can testify that the statement of Witness 1 that he was replaced by a German prisoner is correct. I worked with him.

Witness 3.—I am a resident of Raasay. I worked for Bairds for about two years. I worked in the mines, and also at boring work on the surface in the Island of Skye. I was paid £1 a week. I was brought back to work an engine at the Raasay mine. I asked for more pay and got an increase to 22/- a week. I was then shifted to the power house where I got the same pay. At the outbreak of war I was called to the Colors and was away in the Army about two-and-a-half years. I was then transferred from France back to Raasay to my old job of engineman at the mines. I am now paid 5/3 a day of nine hours. I have seen German prisoners doing work about the mines that islanders could do.

(To be continued.)

A HARD BLOW.

The politician rushed past the official Cerebus into the editorial sanctum. "What do you mean?" he roared. "What do you mean by insulting me as you did in last night's Clamor?" "Just a moment," replied the editor. "Didn't the story appear as you gave it to us, namely, that you had resigned as city treasurer?" "It did. But you put it under the head, 'Public Improvements.'"

All Locals are advised to take advantage of the clubbing offer for Forwards. You can help us, and your Local at the same time. Get the Sub-card with your ordinary supplies and thus circulate the word. Provincial Secretaries are requested to stock Sub-cards for supply.

"There is no occasion for you to envy me," said the prosperous person, "I have as many troubles as you." "I suppose you have, mister," said Dismal Dawson, "but the difficulty with me is that I haven't got anything else."

WOMAN'S COLUMN

THE CALL AND THE RESPONSE.

A picture rises before me. A beautiful woman, with a sweet, gentle face, stands on a platform in an English market-place. She has come to speak to the women, calling on them to demand that the slaughter of their loved ones shall cease. Is it Sunday evening. "We will sing 'The Red Flag,'" she says, "it is the emblem of the blood of martyrs who have died for their faith." And so they sing it in their hundreds, the mothers of men facing death sing it with tear-stained faces and trembling voices. My mother is among them, and her voice rings with passion as she joins the chorus, the same in which she joins at the gates of the prison where her boy is incarcerated because he will not join in the multiplicity of murders called war.

And as they sing, the men stand by, hats raised in reverence. Sister women, the day is dawning!

I see another picture: Through the streets of Melbourne, Australia, passes a huge procession, two thousand, four hundred women march to protest against conscription, and conscription is defeated in Australia.

I see another picture still: Before the huge pile of buildings known as the British House of Parliament, frail, quiet-faced women bear banners, standing long hours in their brave protest against the cruel war. "We want our sons back" says one banner; another reads "The soldiers in the trenches long for peace"; another, "I want my daddy."

There are jeers, insults, loud laughter from some—but again, there are some whose eyes light with joy, and men whose hats are lifted. Yes, the day is dawning. Shall we be afraid?

I think of women of the past, of Susanah Wesley, of Florence Nightingale, of Josephine Butler, of Elizabeth Fry, and of many others, each of whom accomplished a revolution in her day. May we not at least be as brave as they? I will tell you more of them later.

I am so busy answering my letters. They are coming by every mail. The first donation towards getting out our literature has come. It came from the United States, from a woman who wishes to help us. Please write to me. I will answer all your letters and send leaflets as soon as ready to all who ask for them.

Organized Christianity has gone under—failed—failed in the great testing time, yet the message of the Great Teacher still lives on.

Socialist women, are we destined to lead the way? Shall "The Red Flag" be the true cross emblem. If only I could speak with you, could show you those other poor victims of militarism, the girls who are sacrificed to crime wherever there is an army, ah, if I could paint for you a picture, a scene I have witnessed, where some of those victims lay dying of incurable, unnameable diseases. And one had the face of a Madonna. If we are silent, sitting with folded hands, then we are helping to drive them to this.

And the sweated workers. In the struggle for freedom, written in toil and sweat in peace, and wiped out in blood in every war.

"When wilt Thou save the people, Oh God of Mercy—when? Not thrones and crowns, but nations, Not kings and lords, but men? God save the people—they are Thy children, as there are angels fair, from vice, oppression and despair. God save the PEOPLE. Please write to me at once.

Gertrude Richardson,
Swan River, Manitoba.