

# THE RED FLAG

A Journal of News and Views Devoted to the Interests of the Working Class

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FIVE CENTS

## Peace Conference Says Human Labor Power Is a Commodity

"Labor should not be regarded merely as a commodity or article of commerce."

"This sentence is the work of a World Legislature sitting at Paris; the italics are supplied by officials of the American Federation of Labor, whose attention is for the time fixed upon a word. It appears that the American labor delegates took with them to Paris the positive assertion of the Clayton Act that 'the labor of a human being is not a commodity or an article of commerce'; and in Paris the positive was exchanged for an equally emphatic negative. Thus the Fifteenth point."

Thus the opening paragraphs of an article entitled, "Trades Unionism and the Control of Industry," in the New York "Dial," of July 12.

The article proceeds effectually to prove, by taking actual conditions in America, that Clemenceau's version is the more correct one, and also that Mr. Gompers and his organization, the A. F. of L., exist by virtue of the fact that labor is a commodity and an article of commerce. And moreover, that both he and his organization, if form and function count for anything, exist to perpetuate it as such.

The Clayton Act mentioned, embodies the fallacious Gompersian formula merely to protect organized labor against the Sherman Act and its penalties against combination in restraint of trade. But, as the article points out, "Under the protection of this safeguard labor is still handled as a commodity, and will continue to be so handled as long as the American Federation of Labor cherishes its traditional national craft-union policy."

It appears that the wording of the formula taken to Paris by the American labor delegates was altered after they had left for home again and without their sanction. Hence, the flurry at the A. F. of L. convention in Atlanta when attention was first called to the alteration.

Evidently the old fogies in Paris knew more of the economics of wage-labor than the A. F. of L. officials know or pretend they know, because, as the formula stands amended in the Peace Covenant, it is a tacit acknowledgement of the fact that labor (i.e., labor-power) is a commodity, though contained in the renovated formula is a sentimental ethical appeal that it "should not be regarded merely" as such. The wily elder-statesmen at Paris knew, of course, that there is no sentiment in business, but they also knew their unceremonious, glib constituents. Anyway, the amendment is a slap in the face for the "labor-power is not a commodity" fakery.

We use the word "fakers" with certain reservations. Some of the upholders of that theory must be classed as bonchheads. The author of the article in the "Dial" mentions it as being said, that a member of the executive council of the A. F. of L. made a union-label speech in Russia after the Revolution. Ha! Ha!

The author of the article surveys the recent developments and tendencies in the organized labor movement in the U. S. A. and Canada; and develops

## Appeal for the Defence Fund

WE again take the opportunity of urging all our readers to support the defence of their fellow-workers now undergoing their preliminary trial in Winnipeg. Not less than the labor officials do the arrested foreigners also require help. Some of them are Russians and should they be deported they will be sent to Kolchak and to certain and horrible deaths. There is nothing surer than that, and the authorities know it, but they will deport them without compunction. It depends on your efforts whether these men can be saved.

Comrade Victor Midgley, secretary-treasurer of the British Columbia collecting agency, informs us that contributions are coming in good from this province and will be acknowledged from time to time in the B. C. Federationist. The S. P. of C. has already circularized the country, but in addition to this another circular will also be sent out under the joint auspices of the O. B. U., the B. C. Federation of Labor, Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, the Federated Labor Party, the S. P. of C., and other working class bodies in Vancouver.

Our many thanks are due to those who have already so kindly responded to our appeal. Keep on with the good work.

We append below part of a circular from the secretary of the Central Defence Committee in Winnipeg:

Winnipeg, July 14, 1919.

"To All the Workers of Canada and the United States—

Greetings:

"No worker who is active in the labor movement or any other movement, that dares to criticize the government or the profiteers is any longer safe in Canada. At any time the charge of sedition may be brought against you and the power of this Immigration Act brought into play. It is up to you as wage earners to protest against this infamy. It might be your turn next. Do all in your power to get your fellow workers to take action. Thousands of petitions are being circulated throughout the country—see that you get them, have them filled and sent to the Minister of Justice at Ottawa.

"Those brothers not of British nationality are still confined to jail and may be railroaded out of the country without having a fair jury trial unless the workers make a most emphatic protest. Thousands of dollars are needed immediately so that the brothers who have made the sacrifice may get the best available counsel to conduct their trial. Send along your donation as soon as possible, and get your fellow workers to do their share. In this way you will not only be helping the men who stood up for justice, but you will also be helping the whole working class movement. The action already taken by the authorities is a direct blow to every organization that is agitating for better social, economic and political conditions in Canada. Now is the

the conclusion that the workers are moving in the direction of eliminating the commodity-status of human labor power, by preparing to assume the responsibilities of control over the means of production.

time for action by the workers; any unnecessary delay will make the matter more serious.

"Hoping this appeal will awaken the sympathy and rally the support of every working man and woman in the Dominion and the U. S.,

"Yours in anticipation of support.

"JAMES LAW,

"Secretary Defense Committee."

Send all moneys, if possible, by cheque, money order, postal note or by registered letter to the respective treasurers of the following collecting agencies:

British Columbia Agency:—Victor Midgley, Postoffice Drawer 879, Vancouver, B. C.

Alberta Agency:—A. Broatch, 1203 Eighth Avenue East, Calgary, Alta.

Central Collection Agency:—E. Robinson, Secretary Trades and Labor Council, Winnipeg, Man.

Contributions will be acknowledged at a later date through the Labor and Socialist press.

C. STEPHENSON,

Secretary D. E. C. Socialist Party of Canada.

### ITALY

An Italian journalist, writing in the New York "Nation," says: "In regard to Italy, we find she is in a worse plight than any other country. When the national wealth is mortgaged for more than three-quarters, and the people have not enough resources to extinguish or diminish the public debts, but must pay for their interest and for the increased expenses of the budget, no living man would dare to deny that such an economic and industrial situation bespeaks very dark days for Italy. So the country which entered the war to break the bondage of diplomatic and financial slavery of the Central Empires, and to redeem her sons beyond the Alps, having apparently accomplished these marvelous deeds, will be strangled in another way by her ruinous imperialistic policy. Whichever remedy the rulers of Italy will resort to, it will be a cajolery which the working classes, alert, watchful, anxious to apply their radical programme, will denounce as a policy of deceit and continuous misery for themselves and their kind.

### ATROCITIES

Investigation into charges of cruelty of United States officers to soldiers in prison camps are to be investigated. A horrible condition of affairs has been revealed at a preliminary hearing before a committee of senators, of men tortured and beaten to a pulp with blackjacks. F. W. Dallinger, representative from Massachusetts, characterized the offences "as 'horrors' that hark back to barbarism." The senator evidently never heard of lynching bees in the land of dollar culture and dollar diplomacy.