

HOW SHALL WE ATTAIN INDUSTRIAL PEACE?

(Concluded from Page 5.)

It is time to put in practice the theories which we profess. We stand for co-operation, but there can be no co-operation when the great organizations of labor and capital refuse to meet on a common ground and, in the midst of their star chamber proceedings, endeavor to increase the camouflage of distrust and suspicion. The destinies of industry rest not alone in the hands of labor, nor yet in the hands of capital, but jointly in the hands of both as subordinate to the interests of the State. Political commissions to investigate the causes of industrial unrest and report to the Government have proved a failure in this country.

GOVERNMENT FAILS TO TAKE OPPORTUNITY.

When we entered the war industry became a vital military and national concern, and the Government, because of its dependence on industry, had the opportunity of a century to forward the cause of industrial peace and arbitration. Has it made the most of that opportunity? I venture to say that it has not. By desultory efforts arbitration and recognition of union representatives and shop committees have been brought about among longshoremen, shipbuilders, copper miners and others; but that is not enough. Here, if ever, was a favorable occasion for summoning together the representatives of labor and the captains of industry to establish a plan of industrial peace for the war, and such plan could have been embodied in an agreement—similar to the famous Treasury agreement between the Government and labor in Great Britain—and could have been followed by appropriate Congressional legislation providing for its enforcement and observance. The fundamentals of the plan would have been arbitration and a suspension of strikes and lockouts during the war, but its moral influence would have outlasted the war.

But the Government has adopted no such policy. Though our war programme has been retarded for months by one of the worst epidemics of strikes which the country has ever known, though the delay has rolled up a bill which must be paid for in blood and money, and though many of these strikes,

contrary to the spirit of universal service and national needs, were against the employment of non-union men, still, no decisive stand was taken for arbitration and a suspension of strife as a war measure. When the railroad brotherhoods, for the second time opposing arbitration, threatened last November to paralyze transportation—and this time when we were at war—the President, in conferring with the brotherhood chiefs, did not exact a promise that arbitration should settle the dispute if conciliation failed; the threat to paralyze national transportation was, for the second time, condoned.

A JOINT CONGRESS OF LABOR AND CAPITAL.

But the failure to call a joint congress of labor and capital up to the present time affords no sound reason why the plan should not be put into effect at the next opportunity, or at least when the work of reconstruction is commenced. The meeting of a national congress of all trades would in all probability be followed by joint conferences between leaders of labor and capital in separate trades and in this way there would be ushered in a new era, where labor and capital jointly deliberated over the problems of industry, instead of limiting themselves to separate conventions, which foster class bitterness.

But there is another and equally important phase to this subject. If all opposition to the growth of labor organizations—whether in the form of shop organization or national unions—is withdrawn and the Government is to use the weight and influence of its prestige to bring about a general recognition of the principle of collective bargaining—which does not mean the closed shop—it must be upon condition that labor organizations, whatever their form and scope, are prepared to play the role of business organizations; respectful of the liberties of others and responsible alike to employers and the Government both for the performance of their contracts and reasonable endeavors to maintain law and order in industrial disputes.

If, through a joint congress of labor and capital, the foundations of industrial war are to be gradually replaced by the foundations of industrial peace the congress should consider the platform of the "open shop and recognition of unions and shop committees." The refusal to recognize unions is a war measure, and the demand for the closed shop is a

retaliatory war measure; neither can be surrendered except in consideration of the surrender of the other. Here is a basis of compromise which involves no capitulation of sound principles, but an abandonment of a wrong and untenable position by employers for the abandonment of a wrong and untenable position by the unions.

The closed shop as a national policy is opposed by experience and the fundamental principles of law and economics; its war on the non-unionist, its aim at monopoly, and its denial of equal rights militate against our free institutions, and its effects are economically disastrous. It brought Great Britain to the verge of commercial disaster in times of peace, and when war broke out the union leaders of Great Britain recognized that the establishment of the open shop was imperative if the Empire were to win the war. An artificial monopoly of labor maintained by coercive combinations is as much destructive of healthy rivalry, human incentive and the benefits of competition as any monopoly of capital. Unless labor organizations are subject to the possibilities of competition through the policy of the open shop and the open door, it will rely alone upon a forced monopoly and will lose all incentive to make union membership and union management attractive, serviceable or efficient; all elements of enterprise and healthy growth for organized labor will be ended and it will enter an era of decadence.

These requisites of industrial peace—union responsibility, the sacredness of contracts before the law, union recognition and the open shop—are too complex for such a brief discussion; but one thing is reasonably clear, if property owners are to preserve individual rights and private property, they must at any cost reduce the causes of social hate and social discontent and prove themselves capable of a constructive and liberalized movement for industrial peace.

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