

THE INDICATOR

History :: Economics :: Philosophy :: Current Events

Vol. 1 No. 7

VANCOUVER, B. C., SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1919

FIVE CENTS

My Visit to Bolshevik Russia

Industrial Workers and Peasants:—
Some Conclusions.

Prof. W. T. Goode, in the "Manchester Guardian," Oct. 31.

HERE are two questions which have greatly exercised the Bolshevik Government, and no matter what may be the complexion of the ruling powers in Russia these two questions—that of the workmen and that of the land and the peasants—will remain paramount among all the problems of social order and governance.

One of the central doctrines of Bolshevism is work; everyone up to the age of 60, or until invalidated, is supposed to be occupied in work that is useful to the State. This is one of the reasons of the bitter hostility of those who under the former regime lived without work of any kind, oblivious of the fact that, if they lived, someone must be working to supply the means. In a State which is already a great employer of labor and aims at becoming the only one this doctrine of work implies that the State also controls the distribution of labor, and this in turn implies that the workman must forego much of his freedom, since his labor is arranged for and controlled by the State machine. The manner of this control has vast influence. The extent to which it is considerate or inconsiderate to the individual determines whether it is regarded merely as irksome interference or as a blatant tyranny.

The chief lever in the governance of industry is the constant representation of the workmen upwards from the shop committees, through professional alliances and their committees, to the Committee of Supreme Economic Control—the workmen's parliament. The men have thus a direct interest and share in the formation of all regulations affecting them, and if the system were freely acquiesced in by all it would be the apotheosis of co-operation.

A working day of eight hours has been fixed, with less for occupations that are injurious to health, and only six hours between the ages of 16 and 18, the remaining two hours being spent in study, pay being unaffected. Another feature is the right to a month's holiday with full pay, though the full month has not yet been granted owing to the war conditions, except in the case of the dangerous trades. The ordinary worker has received only two weeks of holiday. At the age of 60, the worker retires on full pay as pension, and if he be invalidated or incapacitated before that age, a committee decides on the proportion of incapacitation and assesses the retiring allowance accordingly.

A Graduated Wage Tariff.

Elaborate tariffs have been prepared for all classes of occupation without exception, the gradation be-

ing very minute, and fixed scales of pay for all the stages apportioned. The labor of drawing up these must have been incredible; it was supplied by the professional alliances, and the tariffs are regularly revised. Pay ranged from 600 roubles a month up to 3000 roubles, but a revision provided, from the 1st September, for the lower scale to be 1200 roubles, and the higher 4000 roubles. Even this is not the highest. Where a much-needed specialist is in question, a committee of the Commissaries, after investigating the case, can order any sum to be paid. But such cases are judged on their merits and according to the public need. When I was there, Lenin himself received 2000 roubles a month, a figure a long way below the highest grade of salaries on the former tariff.

There is no reason why any workman should remain in the position fixed for him by the tariff, for by employing his leisure in self-improvement, he can advance, and, it was asserted, many do advance. More than that, it was said that the elections to the various committees tend to bring out the men who possess special qualities, and make the system selective of the best brains among the mass of workmen. If that is true, it is high praise, and, in any case, I came personally across instances of workers who had been elected by their fellows on to a workmen's committee, had proved their worth, and had advanced right up to the Supreme Council.

Each mill or factory has its workmen's committee, concerned chiefly now about the conditions of work, hygiene, keeping of regulations, and the like. Groups of mills belonging to the same industry are arranged in trusts, also with their committee, on which workers, technicians, and the professional alliances are represented, charged with the business operations, distribution of orders, raw material and labor, and controlling the financial business of the mills in the trust. To each mill there is a management committee, where the directors and technicians hold the deciding voice. This state of things is of recent date. In the early stages the change of rule produced chaos; output went down horribly low, and discipline disappeared. It was only after more than a year of experiments that the comparative success of the present was secured. In all this, it seems to me that the industries did but reflect the condition of the railways, and that Krassin's action in the latter case found its counter-part in the efforts made to restore industry to more normal action.

For industries do really function. Many factories are closed, others are occupied in the making of munitions, but very many function more or less fully, and goods are produced. The

absence of raw material has provoked an inventive spirit. Cotton mills, for instance, are working on flax threads cut up into short lengths to imitate cotton fibre; generating stations have been built on the turf marshes for an unlimited supply of power, because of the lack of the ordinary coal and oil fuel and the difficulty of a full supply of wood. One thing seems certain, the Russian has been forced by the conditions of war to be self-sufficient, or, as one mill director put it to me, "We have been forced to learn many things which we shall not forget."

The land question has also passed through various stages since the March revolution. Before the fall of the Kerensky Government, the peasants had begun taking the land, and the Bolsheviks, who played for peasant support by promising land, had to regularize what had already been done and keep their promises. The great landowners were expropriated, the land surveyed, and divided amongst the peasants who were landless or possessed too little. Even here, the doctrine of work was put into force—no one has more land than he and his family can cultivate; there is to be no hired labor. But they tried to overcome the drawbacks of these small holdings by setting up land communes, where the advantages of co-operative farming were worked out in concrete object-lessons for the peasants to follow; by establishing stations, some 600 of them, all over the country for the improvement of seeds and of stock, the results being freely placed at the disposal of the peasants, who were beginning to use them, a fact of which I myself had ocular demonstration.

The special domains of the former landowners, often highly cultivated, were retained either as experimental stations or as examples of farming worthy of imitation. In fact, after the act of expropriation is granted, the land policy seems to be a good one, for much has been done to satisfy, instruct, and raise the peasant.

But, with it all, the political value of these operations among workers and peasants has always been kept in view. The improvement of hours of labor, of pay, the provision of opportunities for a good use of leisure, are aimed in this sense at providing a solid backing for Bolshevism among industrial workmen, while the giving of land to the landless peasant has undoubtedly produced that very effect among the lowest class of peasant. The rich peasant is left alone, he is generally hostile, but the middle peasant, who is a doubtful political quantity, is made the object of a steady and a powerful propaganda. Among a considerable section of workers, and among the lowest class of peasants, the success of the Bolsheviks is great.

JAPANESE WORKERS BOLT CONFERENCE

They Accuse Employers' Group of
Bad Faith in Labor Negotiations

Washington, Nov. 27.—Japanese workers' delegates to the international labor conference "bolted" the conference and denounced the Japanese Government delegates, charging them with bad faith and deliberate falsity.

While trouble has been brewing for some days between the workers and employers' groups of Japan, it came to a climax today, when the employees tried to force adoption of a 48-hour week. This was defeated by the employers' group.

In a statement, the workers' committee charged that certain telegraphic instructions from the Japanese Government which they said were intended for all delegates from Japan, were withheld from the workers' delegates by the government representatives.

TOBACCO FOR CARDINAL MERCIER'S PIPE

The Belgian prelate who a short while ago visited Canada and took occasion to denounce Socialism might with profit tend to his own Belgian vineyard first. The latest Belgian elections gave as result that the Catholics have lost about fifteen seats and the Liberals seven seats to the Socialists. There are indications of Socialist progress everywhere. It seems certain that the Catholics will lose their majority in the chamber.

Workers' Liberty Bonds

For the Defense of the Men
Arrested as a Result of the
Winnipeg Strike, in Denomina-
tions of \$1, \$2 and \$5. **Have
You Got Yours Yet?**

A DAY'S PAY FOR WINNIPEG

Liberty of Speech and Action Is
Worth Paying and Fighting For

Make all monies payable to
A. S. Wells, Secretary of Defense
Committee, 405 Dunsmuir Street,
Vancouver, B. C.

Labor Defence Fund

Send all money and make all
cheques payable to A. S. Wells, B. C.
Federationist, Labor Temple, Vancou-
ver, B. C.

Collection agency for Alberta: A.
Broatch, 1203 Eighth avenue east, Cal-
gary, Alta.

Central Collection Agency: J. Law,
Secretary, Defence Fund, Room 1,
530 Main street, Winnipeg.