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THE CANADIAN FORWARD

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UNDER THE BRITISH FLAG

Trade Unions Prohibited in the West Indies.

British Government Approves New Law—Kaiser Will Be Green With Envy.

On the 5th day of March, 1917, Mr. Bowerman, M.P., the Secretary of the British Trades Union Congress, asked an innocent-looking question in Parliament as to whether or not the British Government approved of a new law passed by the Legislative Council of St. Christopher and Nevis, British West Indies, and approved by the Governor, whereby trade and labour unions were prohibited. Mr. Walter Long, M.P., the Secretary for the Colonies, replied that this "legislation was necessary to prevent serious disturbance due to a movement in which a pro-German was implicated." In the special circumstances the new law had his approval. "I may add," he continued, "that the Acting Governor has recently arranged with the employers of labour for a general 25 per cent. increase of wages, and that the labouring population are satisfied with the concessions made to them."

In the first place, if the Governor found it necessary to induce the employers to concede a 25 per cent. increase in wages, there must have been some justification for "the movement in which the pro-German was implicated." And, secondly, the existence of some pro-German agitator is no conceivable justification for the total prohibition of Trade Unions; indeed, we should say that the prohibition of Trade Unions must have a very marked effect in increasing the pro-German's following and influence. If a mass of men are being exploited beyond endurance, are the authorities to be allowed to suppress Trade Union action for betterment on the ground that there is or may be a "pro-German" implicated? And as for the epithet, "pro-German," anyhow, do we not know it as a handy term of abuse cast by every shallow-pated Jingo and by every swindler, exploiter, and cornering rascal at those who dare to expose extortions and robberies during war-time. Your exploiter's idea of patriotism is robbery, and, naturally, any objector to being robbed he labels "anti-patriot" and "pro-German." Mrs. Pankhurst yells that Lord Grey is a "pro-Bulgarian" simply because the epithet "pro-German" has become so common that it carries no sting, and some fresh invective is required. When we protested against the House Factors in Scotland evicting soldiers' wives because they would not and could not pay increased rent, one House Factor wrote saying we were "pro-German." The "pro-German" excuse, therefore, for suppressing Trade Unionism is simply a piece of barefaced impudence. Even were it true that an engineers' leader or a miners' leader in this country was "pro-German," not even the Editor of the Morning Post would suggest that as a reason for suppressing the Engineers' or the Miners' Unions. When suppression of a Union is decided upon in this country it will be heralded and explained by some story that will have a sporting chance of being believed by, at least, the more ignorant and gullible sections of the people, even if they have to be drunk at the time they believe it!

We have received a copy of the Ordinance referred to in Mr. Bowerman's question. Its contents are beyond serious argument, and if Mr. Loring approves of a resurrection of the Combination Laws, his resignation should be instantly demanded; and, if Labour representatives continue to sit in a Cabinet that does not withdraw any Imperial approval that may have been extended to a regulation forbidding Trade Unionism, then surely the limit in political and class apostasy has been reached.

Here is the text of the Ordinance:

"TRADE AND LABOUR UNIONS (PROHIBITION) ORDINANCE, 1916.

No. 9 of 1916. L.S.

I assent.....

15th December, 1916.

T. A. V. BEST, Acting Governor,

ST. CHRISTOPHER AND NEVIS.

No. 9 of 1916.

An Ordinance to prohibit the formation of Trade and Labour Unions during the present war.

Be it ordained by the Governor and Legislative Council of St. Christopher and Nevis as follows:

SHORT TITLE.

1.—This Ordinance may be cited as the Trade and Labor Unions (Prohibition) Ordinance, 1916.

NATURE OF OFFENCE AND PENALTY.

2.—Any person who forms, or is concerned in the formation of:—

(a) Any Trade Union;

(b) Any Labor Union;

(c) Any Trade and Labor Union;

(d) Any combination, whether temporary or permanent, which has for its object, or one of its objects, the regulation of the relations between masters or employers of labor and servants or laborers, or the imposing of restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade, business or plantation;

shall be guilty of an offence against this Ordinance, and shall be liable on summary

conviction thereof before a District Magistrate, to a penalty not exceeding £50, or to be imprisoned for a term not exceeding six months, or to both fine and imprisonment, as the District Magistrate may direct.

INTERPRETATION CLAUSE.

3.—For the purposes of this Ordinance, any person who:—

(a) Receives or solicits a subscription from any person on behalf of any such Union or Combination as hereinbefore mentioned, whether such Union or Combination has already been formed or is proposed to be formed;

(b) Enrols or solicits or advises the enrolment of the name of any person as a member of such Union or Combination;

(c) Prints, publishes, circulates, or distributes, or causes to be printed, published, circulated, or distributed any circular, leaflet, or pamphlet notifying persons of the formation or the proposed formation of any such Union or Combination;

(d) Signs any such circular, leaflet, or pamphlet intended to be printed, published, circulated, or distributed; or

(e) Being a member or promoter of any such Union or Combination does any act which may induce or encourage any person to join or subscribe to any such Union or Combination;

shall be deemed to be concerned in the formation of such Union or Combination.

SEARCH WARRANT AUTHORIZED FOR DOCUMENTS RELATING TO UNIONS.

4.—Whenever it is made to appear on oath that there is reasonable cause to suspect that an offence is being committed against this Ordinance it shall be lawful for any District Magistrate by warrant under his hand to authorize any member of the Leeward Islands Police Force to enter (and, if necessary, by force) and search any place either in the day or in the night, and if any circular, leaflet, pamphlet, book or other document dealing with or relating to the formation or operation of any such Union or Combination, as hereinbefore mentioned, is found in any place so searched, to seize and secure the same for the purpose of being produced in evidence in any proceeding before any Court of Justice in which the same may be required. And any person who hinders or molests any person acting under the authority of any warrant issued under this section shall be liable, on summary conviction thereof before a District Magistrate, to pay a fine not exceeding £50, or to be imprisoned for a term not exceeding six months.

POSSESSION OF DOCUMENTS RELATING TO UNIONS.

5.—Whenever upon any such search as in last preceding Section mentioned any circular, leaflet, pamphlet, book, or other document dealing with or relating to the formation or operation of any such Union or Combination as aforesaid is found, the person in whose possession or on whose premises it is found shall be deemed, unless and until the contrary is proved, to be a person concerned in the formation of such Union or Combination, within the meaning of this Ordinance at the time when such document was found.

COMMENCEMENT AND DURATION.

6.—This Ordinance shall come into operation on such day as the Governor may appoint in that behalf by proclamation, and shall remain in force until the termination of the present war.

T. A. V. BEST, President of the Council.

Passed by the Legislative Council, the 14th day of December, 1916.

G. C. JOHNSON, Clerk of the Council.

Duly published in the town of Basseterre, the 16th day of December, 1916.

E. A. EVELYN, Acting Provost Marshal.

From an English correspondent.

THE VEINS OF WEALTH.

By John Ruskin

(English art critic and university professor, 1819-1900; author of many works upon social questions, and master of perhaps the greatest English prose style.)

Primarily, which is very notable and curious, I observe that men of business rarely know the meaning of the word "rich." At least if they know, they do not in their reasonings allow for the fact, that it is a relative word, implying its opposite "poor" as positively as the word "north" implies its opposite "south." Men nearly always speak and write as if riches were absolute, and it were possible, by following certain scientific precepts, for everybody to be rich. Whereas riches are a power like that of electricity, acting only through inequalities or negations of itself. The force of the guinea you have in your pocket depends wholly on the default of a guinea in your neighbor's pocket.

If he did not want it, it would be of

no use to you; the degree of power it possesses depends accurately upon the need or desire he has for it—and the art of making yourself rich, in the ordinary mercantile economist's sense, is, therefore, equally and necessarily the art of keeping your neighbor poor.

AN EXCUSE FOR MORAL COWARDS

These are war times; we must be careful what we say about the war, the authorities won't stand for criticism.

How often we have heard this apology for moral cowardice. The only thing for any honest man to worry about is in being too cowardly to speak the truth, in order to save thousands of human lives. For, remember, there can be no early or lasting peace until the truth is told. The greatest danger that besets democracy is not war, but "ignorance and hypocrisy," and the only thing that can dispel these is to shed the light of truth abroad. What we need is a few million honest, intelligent men of all nations who will dare to speak the truth and damn the consequences. Against these the gates of hell will not prevail. We call for volunteers.