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The Strike Issue and Necessary New Alignments

When Trade Unions Appreciate the Peril of Their Position in the Present Crisis They Must Align with Capital for the Preservation of Their Mutual Existence.

As we write the strike in the district of Vancouver has lasted two weeks. It may be said to have reached an impasse. The accessions the strikers are making to their numbers is being lost through numbers returning to work.

No end is at present in sight and the strike committee seems to be holding its power among the rank and file of the trades unionists. Time appears to be throwing a little light on the issues at stake. Ostensibly the strike was called for the purpose of extending sympathy to those on strike in Winnipeg. The reason for the strike was said to be the principle of collective bargaining. Subsequently the strike committee announced that the reason was the Dominion Government refused to take back striking postmen. At base none of these reasons appear to be sincere and the leaders feel unwilling at the present time perhaps, not regarding it as quite opportune to state the real end which they have in view.

The progress of events in Russia following the revolution when society seemed to have been dissolved, has inflamed the imagination of the extreme radical labor leaders to such an extent that the situations in other countries seem to afford "possibilities." The forces of destruction to the existing order is active and enthusiastic in Europe, the United States, Argentina and elsewhere, and Canada is not free from these influences and their propaganda. The issue of the struggle is becoming more and more evident and involves the destruction of capitalism as the existing system and the establishment of a workmen's dictatorship. We do not know whether the strike committee and the present Vancouver Trades and Labor Council are conscious or unconscious of this issue, and we do not know whether they consciously have this end in view, but we do know that they are working in this direction and to attain this end, whether they are aware of it or not.

Under the present system of capitalism persons with capital and persons with labor are co-operating for the pro-

duction of commodities, having profit in mind. Labor, for the improvement of its conditions, has combined in the unions for its own protection and its betterment. Capitalists have combined in other ways for their own permanence and protection and for the insurance of profit from capital employment. From the rise of the factory system of about a century ago both have made tremendous strides. Capital has increased its activity tremendously and has exploited

and developed natural resources, improved the conditions of manufacture, created efficiency and has produced those great changes in industry which is at once the achievement and the marvel of the present age. While capital has been advancing labor has advanced only less markedly through the operations of the trades or crafts union. Those conditions which will admit of favorable conditions of work with a living wage have been created by reason of the co-operation of workmen against their natural opponent, capital. Labor, through its unions, has made a vital contribution to the happiness of the world, and has in its struggle created a condition wherein the so-called laborer or wage earner is assured of a stable position in industry and an honorable position in society. He has even advanced in some countries to a dominating position in politics and statescraft.

The war has in four years advanced the interests of labor to the point where a permanent change appears to be in sight with regard to its own elevation on a parity with capital. In other words the situation seems to be working out industrially in such a way that the right of the workman to participate in profit is being recognized and will likely, within the next decade, be the established rule of industry. The necessity for co-operation between the employer and the employee, between the owner and the wage earner has been so enforced by the war upon the consciousness of both and the public as a whole that the issue is not in doubt and must be the necessary accompaniment of the immediate future. The right of the laborer to share in the profits will take different forms suited to the convenience and the method of operation of the particular industry. The variations will be wide. The

"Our ability to meet and retrieve our war obligations will depend upon our power to increase production of natural and manufactured commodities and to economize individually so as to bring about each year substantial increase in domestic wealth and savings, and a more favorable balance in our international trade. In other words, the motto for the future, as it was for the war, must be:

"'Produce and Save.'"—Sir Thomas White's Budget speech.