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LONDON, SATURDAY, DEC. 13, 1919

LABOR AS A COMMODITY

"Labor must not be longer treated as a commodity. It must be regarded as the activity of human beings possessed of deep yearnings and desires."—President Wilson's Message to Congress.

Look where we may throughout the world today the horizon is clouded with menacing discontent on the part of wage-earners; the press is filled with it; governments, no matter what their form, find here their gravest problem. It is not that surprising to find that it makes up the burden of President Wilson's latest address to Congress. In many respects the President's message is disappointing. But superficial and inadequate as his treatment of the problem of industrial relations is, it is none the less of absorbing importance and interest; perhaps all the more so because of its disappointing inadequacy which may be in part attributable to the illness that unfortunately limits, at present, all the activities of the executive head of the United States.

"I would call your attention," writes the President, "to the widespread condition of political restlessness in our body politic. The causes of this unrest, while various and complicated, are superficial rather than deep-seated." And he goes on to attribute the unrest largely to the delay in signing the Peace Treaty; when this is done he prophesies that "this unrest will rapidly disappear."

Few who have given any thought or study to the subject will share this unduly optimistic view; though many who speak or write on the subject seem to think such platitudinous optimism both pious and patriotic. Indeed the foregoing passage seems to justify the suspicion that parts of the address were written by less cunning hands than Mr. Wilson's. The following paragraph, which is hardly in keeping with the one just quoted, is more in the President's form:

"The great unrest throughout the world, out of which has emerged a demand for an immediate consideration of the difficulties between Capital and Labor, bids us put our house in order. Frankly, there can be no permanent and lasting settlements between Capital and Labor which do not recognize the fundamental concepts for which Labor has been struggling through the years."

The ratification of the Peace Treaty will leave untouched such radical differences as are here indicated.

Deep-seated are the causes of the great unrest; to treat them as superficial is to court disaster. The "transfusion of radical theories from seething European centres" goes but a short way in explaining a condition which is found in England where "foreigners" have nothing to do with it.

A whole generation has grown up since Leo XIII. wrote in 1891:

"That the spirit of revolutionary change, which has long been disturbing the nations of the world, should have passed beyond the sphere of politics and made its influence felt in the cognate sphere of practical economics is not surprising. The elements of the conflict now raging are unmistakable in the vast expansion of industrial pursuits and the marvellous discoveries of science; in the changed relations of masters and workman; in the enormous fortunes of some few individuals, and the utter poverty of the masses; in the increased self-reliance and closer mutual cooperation of the working classes; as also, finally, in the prevailing moral degeneracy."

The universal unrest in the world of labor is emphatically not a mere aftermath of the War as many would have us believe. From the watch-

tower of Israel the on-coming revolutionary wave was clearly seen by Leo XIII. nearly thirty years ago. He warned the world of "the momentous gravity of the state of things" even at that time; and declared that "a remedy must be found, and found quickly, for the misery and wretchedness pressing so heavily and unjustly at this moment on the vast majority of the working classes." The great Pope traces the origins of the conflict to age-old conditions, and shows that the way out is the way back to Christian principles.

Labor has long been treated as a commodity, the price of which, like that of wheat or coal or merchandise of any kind, must be regulated by the economic law of supply and demand. Wages, therefore, go up or down without any regard whatever to the human needs and human rights of the worker. Theoretically this "economic law" may not now be so boldly asserted; but practically whatever relaxation there has been is due almost entirely to the successful struggle of labor unions and the increased political power of the workers.

Amongst the millions of unorganized workers, men and women, the "economic law" is mercilessly enforced.

Even organized labor in the States finds it necessary to lay down as a "fundamental declaration"—

"That in law and in practice the principle shall be recognized that the labor of a human being is not a commodity or article of commerce."

The well-known English statesman and labor leader, Mr. J. H. Thomas, at the opening of the National Industrial Conference thus refers to the same subject:

"The organized workers of Great Britain have made up their minds to obtain for themselves an increasing share in the wealth their labor produces. . . They are dissatisfied with a system of society which treats their labor-power as a mere commodity to be bought, sold and used as though they were machine-like units in the process of wealth-production and distribution, and they therefore demand that they shall become real partners in industry, jointly sharing in determining working conditions and management."

At Paris during the Peace Conference the labor representatives again filed emphatic protest against the ruthless "economic law" that labor is a commodity.

So that President Wilson's declaration quoted at the beginning of this article is not startlingly original; but for all that none the less significant. For labor thought has gone to the very root of the un-Christian economics and philosophy of life which has obtained for centuries; and which has finally enabled "a small number of very rich men to lay upon the teeming masses of the poor a yoke little better than slavery itself."

It is a common thing nowadays to hear lip service paid to labor's rights; but, based as it is on fundamental Christian truths held as inviolable and unchangeable, there is a forcefulness in Leo's enunciation of the human rights of manual workers that is lacking, even in the impassioned, materialistic claims of labor itself.

"Religion teaches," writes Leo in his immortal Encyclical, "the wealthy owner and the employer that their work-people are not to be accounted their bondsmen; that in every man they must respect his dignity and worth as a man and as a Christian; that labor is not a thing to be ashamed of if we lend ear to right reason and to Christian philosophy, but is an honorable calling enabling a man to sustain his life in a way upright and creditable; and that it is shameful and inhuman to treat men like chattels to make money by, or to look upon them merely as so much muscle or physical power."

Here almost in the self-same words Leo protests with all the power and conviction of his Christian soul against "labor being treated as a commodity."

And where today, when at every turn we hear or read something on the subject, is there a pronouncement comparable with Leo's on the human dignity of the workman?

"The workman has property and belongings in respect to which he should be protected; and foremost of all, his soul and mind. . . It is the soul which is made after the image and likeness of God; it is in the soul that the sovereignty resides in virtue whereof man is commanded to rule the creatures below him and to use all the earth and the ocean for his profit and advantage. . . In this respect all men are equal; their

is no difference between rich and poor, master and servant, ruler and ruled, for the same is Lord over all. No man may with impunity outrage that human dignity which God Himself treats with reverence, nor stand in the way of that higher life which is the preparation for the eternal life of heaven. Nay, more: no man has in this matter power over himself. To consent to any treatment which is calculated to defeat the end and purpose of his being is beyond his right; he cannot give up his soul to servitude; for it is not man's own rights which are here in question, but the rights of God, the most sacred and inviolable of rights."

And so when it comes to the rights of the laborer with regard to wages Leo might be looked upon as a radical by the Capitalist press which is never tired of preaching the sanctity of contract to the workers regardless of the shrinking of the dollar's purchasing power. Leo goes to the root of the matter when he deals with this ever-recurring phase of the labor problem:

In so far as labor is personal the workman may accept any rate of wages; "but the labor of the workman is not only his personal attribute, but it is necessary; and this makes all the difference. The preservation of life is a bounden duty of one and all, and to be wanting therein is a crime. It follows that each one has a right to procure what is required in order to live; and the poor can procure it in no other way than through work and wages. Let it be then taken for granted that workman and employer should as a rule, make free agreements, and in particular should agree freely as to wages; nevertheless, there underlies a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely that remuneration should be sufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage-earner."

Here without any regard to the alleged economic law of supply and demand, without for a moment considering labor as a commodity, the great Pope clearly defines the right to a living wage even though bound by contract to work for less. And the Pope not only defines and defends the worker's human right as an individual, but also as husband and father: he has a right to "wages sufficient to enable him to maintain himself, his wife, and his children, in reasonable comfort," moreover such as, by economy, will enable him to lay by a competence against old age; and "the law and its policy should induce as many as possible of the humbler class to become owners."

What percentage of workmen today, how frugal soever they be, own their own homes?

"The Condition of the Working Classes" is a treasury out of which the student may draw new things and old; the old principles of justice which have been overthrown by the hard selfishness of modern materialism, the old concepts of Christian charity, the never-changing principles of right and wrong, may have a new beauty, a new utility, and a new light, when applied to the newest of the problems of modern industry.

Says the President:

"Labor must not be longer treated as a commodity. It must be regarded as the activity of human beings, possessed of deep yearnings and desires. The business man gives his best thoughts to the repair and replenishment of his machinery, so that its usefulness will not be impaired and its power to produce may always be at its height and kept in full vigor and motion. No less regard ought to be paid to the human machine, which, after all, propels the machinery of the world and is the great dynamic force that lies back of all industry and progress. Return to the old standards of wage and industry in employment are unthinkable."

We can conceive of Leo XIII. expressing himself in similar terms; but these would be inevitable changes.

"Labor must not longer be treated as a commodity" is Leo's own declaration in slightly different phrasing.

But who could imagine the author of the Encyclical as setting forth:

"It must be regarded as the activity of human beings, possessed of deep yearnings and desires."

No; the Pope would have said: "human beings possessed of immortal souls."

And thus would he have proclaimed the great fundamental truth which by its countless implications converted the rotten civilization of pagan Rome and the rude barbarism of the invaders who overran it, into

the Christian civilization of Europe; that civilization which is now menaced with destruction from the substitution of "deep yearnings and desires" for the bedrock principles of Christian truth.

Nor could one conceive of Leo's descending to such depths of disgust, even if unconscious, materialism as the appeal to the business man's interest in caring "for the human machine." That Leo would characterize as "shameful and inhuman," differing only in words from "looking upon them as so much muscle or physical power."

No student of the pressing problems of the age we live in can afford to ignore Leo's great Letter wherein, long before the chattering chorus of today, guided by never changing principles, he clearly defined and vigorously defended the human rights of the workman, and fearlessly condemned the prevailing, and then almost unquestioned, economic doctrine that labor is a commodity.

A CATHOLIC LORD MAYOR

Alderman Tom Fox, the Labor Mayor of Manchester, has been the subject of some cabled news lately. It appears that some unemployed labor delegates were quite threatening in their tone and attitude when interviewing the chief magistrate. Mr. Fox told them peremptorily and unequivocally that it was his duty as Lord Mayor to see that the law was obeyed and order observed, and that he was going to do his duty without fear or favor. "I have been unemployed myself," said the Lord Mayor. "Go back," he added, "and tell your friends not to let off so much hot air."

The new Lord Mayor of Manchester who, as already announced in our Catholic Notes, is a Catholic, appears to possess some of the qualities which won universal esteem for his predecessor in office, the late Sir Daniel McCabe.

McCabe was born in St. Patrick's, a populous Irish parish of Manchester. Actively identified with the work of St. Vincent de Paul Society he here learned at first hand the problems of the poor, an invaluable experience which later made him the trusted authority in dealing with the pressing social problems of a great manufacturing city.

Chosen by his colleagues as Mayor, Mr. McCabe, as a Catholic did not of course attend the time-honored Service of the Established Church but designated a Protestant alderman to represent him. The Dean of Manchester, Bishop Welldon, preaching on the occasion had the bad taste to refer publicly to his absence, claiming that the Church of England was more "Catholic" than the intolerantly exclusive Church of the Lord Mayor.

The Dean's remarks had quite a different effect from that intended or desired. Prominent public men and many other prominent non-Catholics still more emphatically voiced their protest against the position assumed by Manchester's Dean and their approbation of that taken by Manchester's Mayor by being present at the Lord Mayor's Mass.

Sir Daniel McCabe was unanimously re-elected, and was knighted for his eminent services during the exacting first years of the Great War.

THE KITCHENER OUTRAGE

The exhibition of Lynch law and mob violence which disgraced Kitchener last week calls for public reprobation and the vindication of the law. If citizens, even the elected representatives of the community, may be set upon and brutally ill-treated with impunity, and property destroyed without reparation, then there is a spirit of lawlessness abroad which will sooner or later recoil on those who now aid and abet riotous disorder because it is the vigorous expression of their own intolerant sentiment.

What was the crime of the victims of this brutal outrage? Simply that they favored or were suspected of favoring the reversion to the name of Berlin by which the city was known from its foundation until a couple of years ago. Surely this is a matter that could have been settled without recourse to those methods which we have been led to believe are peculiarly Prussian.

Editorially the Globe has no admiration for that form of British fair-

play which is exemplified by four hundred brutally assaulting one. But this is a sample of the Globe's staff correspondence on the subject:

Kitchener, Dec. 2.—Changing the postoffice designation of this city back to "Berlin," or any other name that does not represent British trading as does Kitchener, will never again be publicly mooted by the European section of the population of this place. Last night's riot, the worst outbreak of mob violence in the history of this city—and there have been five such outbreaks in a lesser degree since March, 1916—put the quietus once and for all on the campaign which has been carried on in secret for some months past by the pro-German element, to rid the city of its present name.

And later on in the same article:

"There is an effort being made by the anti-British element and by those attacked to blame the police for not giving them protection. There are only five men and the Chief on the local force, and those not in sympathy with the pro-German element declare that it was too small a number to handle last night's mob, which, once it formed, could not be stopped."

The receiver is as bad as the thief; those who condone mob violence in the name of loyalty are on a level with the perpetrators.

Mr. Rancy, the new Attorney-General, is reported to be investigating the disgraceful affair. The decent people of Ontario who feel that the noble sentiments of loyalty and patriotism have been degraded and disgraced will await with confidence his vindication of law and order.

Prussianism by any other name has no sweeter smell.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

THE LATEST historian of England, Mr. Hilaire Belloc, has produced a history designed especially to trace the threads of industrial development from the reign of William III., and to elucidate the economic conditions of today, and as they promise to be in the near future, as the natural and legitimate outgrowth of that upheaval of might against right known to mankind as the "Reformation." The process as summed up by the historian, is as follows:

"THE ENORMOUS increase of population, the corresponding increase of wealth, the decline of the old aristocratic spirit, the transformation of England from a rural to an urban state, the growth of a vast and closely organized police control over the mass of the people, the engraftment and efficient coercion of the population in the interests of organized capital, finally, the advent or at least the promise of a sect which shall have reached its term and the full effects of the Reformation after four hundred years, in the permanent and secure re-establishment of economic conditions which, by whatever term the process may be marked, shall be in essence servile."

THE REFORMATION in its purpose and in its results was simply revolt against that spiritual authority which in Europe had bridged the gulf from barbarism to civilization. It was to the nations the dethronement of justice and the exaltation of greed. It ushered in a social system which placed wealth upon a pinnacle and made poverty a crime. The material gains to the world have been large but it has been at the price of man's dignity and security, until now, just emerged from a cruel and devastating war, humanity finds it necessary to reconstruct the whole foundation. To this end theory and speculation which still stalk abroad will not serve. It is necessary to get back to first principles and this can only be achieved by undoing the work of the past four hundred years and taking God once more into the councils of His own creation.

MEANWHILE the signs are not hopeful. The sectarian bodies are girding themselves for the fray but of ammunition they have a constantly decreasing supply. A religion without dogma, which is their ideal, is a rope of sand. The advice of Dr. Symonds of Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal, to business men and women, is that what little dogma is left—that is whatever is definite and uncontrovertible in belief—must go. The heretic of today, he declared, would be the orthodox of tomorrow. "A new day in religion has dawned, and dogmatic Christianity is giving way to Christianity whose supreme test is not dogma, but life," which is but another way of saying that, contrary to the express words of the Scriptures which he exalts, it matters not what a man believes so long as

his life is in conformity with the shifting standards of the day. So has the "Reformation" come into its own!

WHILE ONE hears much wild talk in Canada (most of it of a contemptuous and denunciatory character) against "foreigners" (and even some Catholics fall in line with it) the same despised "foreigner" may cause native Canadians to wake-up with a rude jolt ere many years have flown. There are of course foreigners and foreigners, and the "bolshievis" type is not to be taken as including them all, or even any considerable section of them.

THERE is the "foreigner" who goes quietly about his business, interferes in no other man's affairs, seeks to place no burden upon the community, and in however humble or obscure a fashion bears his part in the making of the nation. He may have but a meagre acquaintance with our language, and not easily fall into line with our social customs, but he is none the less entitled to be regarded as a citizen of Canada and to be treated with the respect and fairness to which that status entitles him.

WE ALSO hear much nowadays about the "Canadianizing" of these "strangers within our gates"—a term which in light of the use made of it to rob them of their Faith, has come to be of somewhat evil omen. It is of course very desirable that they who seek a home in Canada should be fully seized of the necessity of adapting themselves to our modes of thought and our institutions. But this is not brought about by the display on the part of their would-be instructors of principles and proceedings that give the lie to their Christian profession. Inevitably the "decay of dogma," with a large section of the people of Canada has precipitated the pernicious practice referred to.

THE CHIEF Librarian of Winnipeg Public Library is authority for the statement that in the West the "foreigner" is being educated and taught the duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship by his own children. The love of these foreign-born children for books is, he says, greater than that of our own Canadian children. They go regularly to the public libraries and ask for books that will inform themselves and teach their parents a knowledge of English. They read with a purpose, while the native-born read only to be amused. This is our reason for saying that native Canadians are liable to wake up some of these days to find themselves outdistanced by the newcomer. And all this will be brought about without the intervention of officious sectarianism which, finding itself without mental or spiritual moorings, would drag others down to its own level.

MUST END MOB RULE

Mob violence is to be condemned wherever it takes place, and there have been far too many presentations of it in Canada recently. The latest outbreak, that at Kitchener, in which a member of Parliament and an Alderman were attacked and injured, a member of the Legislature subjected to less strenuous abuse, and a newspaper office wrecked, was a particularly senseless proceeding. It matters little whether these men, or any of them, had any part whatever in the proposal to change the name of the city of Kitchener back to that of Berlin. The idea was overwhelmingly defeated in a constitutional way at the meeting of the City Council, and that should have satisfied all its opponents, as it did the majority of them. The citizens who thereafter set law and order at defiance were not patriots. On the contrary, they were setting a very bad example in patriotism, and one that is calculated to encourage propagandists of rule by violence, whose ambition is to see the "Red" flag floating in the place of the Union Jack.

It is probable that the leaders of the Kitchener mob are known to a number of people, whereas in the larger cities a very considerable crowd of rioters could do much damage to persons and property and get away without others being able to pick out or describe the men who led them. There should be no loss of time in putting the machinery of the law into operation against the instigators and ringleaders of the Kitchener riot. In the peculiar circumstances of the case it would seem to be the duty of the Attorney-General to initiate this action. Ontario expects him to be a policeman, regardless of what any former incumbent of the office may have said or thought as to that. It is probable that in the course of the proceedings the representatives of the Attorney-General's Department would be able to clear up disputed

ULSTER DIFFICULTY

ULSTER MAKES NO SEPARATE CLAIM

BY PROFESSOR ROSE MACNILL, National University of Ireland

THE proposal of separate governmental provision for Ulster, or, as it is commonly called, the Ulster Partition policy, did not come to the front until the "serious complication" was recognized in the Spring of 1914. We have seen that the distinct Ulster policy was first definitely announced by Lord Randolph Churchill, an Englishman, and did not then take shape in Ulster; was first put into working form by an All-Ireland convention of the landlord party in Dublin, and was not even then adopted permanently in Ulster; finally when the direction and shaping of the movement was taken in hands by Carson, and liberally financed from England, and every move was prearranged with a view to being described and processed in the English press. All this time, no separate claim was made for Ulster. That Ulster might be excluded from a measure of self-government which might be granted to the rest of Ireland—such a suggestion was mooted here or there; it was definitely discussed, denounced, and rejected at a further Unionist convention held in Dublin, and attended by Ulster delegates, the Right Hon. Walter Long voicing the sense of the meeting. The proposal to separate Ulster from the rest of Ireland, Mr. Long said, was the most ignominious and cowardly suggestion that had ever been brought forward; it was not Ulster that needed special treatment; under any settlement of Irish affairs Ulster was strong enough to protect its own interests; not Ulster, but the scattered Unionist minority in the other parts of Ireland, required special provisions for their protection. To this declaration no contrary voice was raised.

In short, from the outset the object of the special Ulster agitation had been solely and simply to defeat Home Rule. The argument was that government by an Irish majority was intolerable to Ulster people, and the conclusion was that Ulster people would not tolerate the establishment of such government in Ireland. At a still later stage, when the suggestion of a separate provision for six of the Ulster counties was brought forward, Sir Edward Carson dealt with it in a summary way: "I know nothing about six counties or about any number of counties." Nor, up to the present hour, has any claim for such a separate provision been formally and publicly made on behalf of the Ulster Unionists. The Solemn Covenant, drawn up by Sir Edward Carson and adopted on a Sunday at the places of worship of the various Protestant denominations in Ulster, was an engagement to resist Home Rule simply, not to resist its application to Ulster or to any part of Ulster. It will be observed that, so far, in every stage and manifestation of the Ulster difficulty, everything is in consonance with the "English interest" doctrine of Prime Minister and the English policy of Lord Randolph Churchill.

THE PROPOSED PARTITION OF ULSTER

As already stated, a compromise, involving the exclusion of Ulster or the greater part of Ulster, from the operation of Home Rule, was secretly formed on Mr. Redmond and by Mr. Asquith early in 1914. By means of indoor and unreported conferences, Mr. Redmond in turn endeavored to force the same compromise on his Ulster supporters; and, as a necessary part of the same move, he undertook to control and neutralise the Irish Volunteer organisation, and thus to remove "a serious complication" from the way of English statesmen.

In July 1914, it became known that a European war of unprecedented magnitude was imminent. The main forces of the British Navy were brought together off Spithead. To get rid, if possible, of the Irish difficulty, a conference of party leaders, including Mr. Redmond and Sir Edward Carson, was quickly convened in Buckingham Palace, London. The certain imminence of the Great War was known to all the principals at this conference. The present writer ascertained at the time that it was known to Mr. Redmond, and the other principals cannot have been less fully forewarned. Here for the first time, so far as is known, and in view of so great a crisis, the Partition Policy was made a definite matter of discussion with the Unionist leaders. No account of the proceedings, or of their outline or outcome, has ever been made public on the authority of all or any of the participants, but it is understood that the principal issue was the exclusion of Ulster or the greater part of Ulster from the operation of the Home Rule Bill, which had then, for the third time, and finally, in three successive years, been passed by Parliament, and only