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BELONG

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TORONTO

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STRIKE—IT IS GETS TORONTO

STRIKE TORNADO HITS TORONTO.

Labor Unrest General.

Strikes, like measles, are infectious, or at least this deduction may reasonably be made in summing up the prevailing strike in the City of Toronto, and more generally speaking throughout the Dominion of Canada, at the present time. The plute press is busily engaged in diagnosing the disease, and it is almost certain that so far as one capitalist newspaper is concerned (The Toronto Telegram) that it will ultimately resolve itself into an attack of measles of the German brand. The local organizations immediately affected are as follows:

Civic employes on strike, 2,300; affected, 5,000.

Machinists on strike, 100; affected, 3,000.

Plumbers and pipe-layers on strike, 70; affected, 500.

The development of strike sentiment in the City of Toronto is causing considerable uneasiness to the heads of civic departments and the Canadian Manufacturers' Association. Toronto, which is generally considered conservative, and somewhat reactionary in its disposition to all measures affecting the general welfare of the people, is likely to receive a severe jolt within the next few weeks by the possible revolt of a very large number of industrial workers. There are between 25,000 and 30,000 organized trade unionists in the City of Toronto, and the sympathetic element is very strong at the present time. The overbearing action of the City Council in refusing to grant a board of conciliation to its disgruntled employes some months ago is largely responsible for the prevailing condition of things, as the employes affected by the demand for increased wages, have repeatedly made application for a board of conciliation to settle the differences between themselves and the civic authorities. The refusal on the part of the city administration to consider this means of settling the question in dispute, has had the effect of giving a direct line-up of the organized forces of labor in the city.

A special meeting of the Trades and Labor Council has been called to take place this week, when the civic employes will give an explanation of their position. There is a general feeling in labor circles that the organized labor movement cannot afford to allow the civic strikers to lose the battle. This being so, it is more than probable that a determined attempt will be made to make the strike effective. In such an event a condition similar to the recent one in Winnipeg may be created. It is evident from general prevailing conditions that a movement of this char-

acter may in the near future incite an industrial revolt that will affect the whole Dominion of Canada.

The Machinists' Strike.

The question in dispute between the machinists' locals and the manufacturers was brought to a head by the dismissal of one of their members working for the Russell Motor Company. It is one of the fundamentals of trade agreements between employers and employes that men who are members of the union or shop committees shall not be discriminated against for acting on such committees, as this is considered an elementary necessity in the execution of the work of the union, and is vital for the protection of union members who may be called upon to take a prominent part in the deliberations which are consequent upon unjust conditions prevailing in the factory. In this case the secretary of one of the machinists' locals was fired for no other ostensible reason than the legitimate performance of his duties. Action was taken immediately by his co-workers, with the result that 100 machinists and tool-makers laid down their tools in order to bring about his reinstatement. Not succeeding in this, they asked other members of the union what they were going to do to remedy the matter. The District Council of the machinists called a mass meeting, at which it was proposed that a period of one hour's notice to reinstate the dismissed employe be given to the company, the refusal of which would necessitate a general tie-up of the whole industry. It was decided after due consideration not to act so hastily in the question of time allowed for settlement, with the result that one week's due notice was given for this purpose. The strike vote will be taken during the course of this week.

The Railway Dispute.

The trouble arising between the men and the Canadian railway companies is due to a demand put forward by the workers for a substantial increase in wages and a general eight-hour day. The organizations affected are machinists, specialists, pattern-makers, moulders, car builders, repair men, boilermakers and blacksmiths, and all the employes of the motive power department must approximate between 40,000 and 50,000 men represented by the workers' committee. At the present time only the mechanical department are involved, but it is very likely that before the Railway War Board is through with the negotiations that 140,000 men will be involved.

Economic Cause of Social Unrest.

The falling price of human "Labor power" in ratio to the relative increasing cost of living, provides the immediate necessity for an increase in the exchange value of labor. The primary function of the trade union

is to protect the workers from the impositions of overbearing masters, and to secure a standard of living conditions that is commensurate with the highest welfare of the individual. Considering the cause of the present unrest and the function of the union, it is an inevitable consequence of unbridled profiteering that the antagonism between employer and employe has become so pronounced and upon further investigation it will be conclusively proved that our present social system which is based on "property rights" in the products of human labor, is, in the last analysis, the primary cause of the present social discontent. Let there be no misunderstanding upon this question—The only possible permanent solution of this problem lies in the complete transformation of capitalist property into the means of wealth production—into "social property" for the benefit of the wealth producers.

The Government Responsible.

It is the duty of any representative government to study these social problems and to heed the address of bodies representing hundreds of thousands of honest toilers in order to promote harmony where at present there is discord. No excuse can be offered that the present administration in Ottawa has not had the facts presented to them. The Trades and Labor Congress of Canada has repeatedly drawn the responsible Minister's attention to the before cited facts. In the year 1917 the Congress executive addressed the Premier and the Minister of Labor after this fashion.

Mr. Draper made reference to the resolutions recently passed by the convention of the Congress, also to the report of the Executive Council on the subject and the report of the committee on Officers' Reports. He stated that it was fortunate that the Government had the statistical branch of the Labor Department available to use in obtaining information that would justify immediate action in preventing the vendors of life's necessities from increasing prices to the alarming extent they had been increased in recent months. There could be no doubt as to the power of the Government under the War Measures Act, as the letter and spirit of the Act provided for such a situation as that which had arisen, and therefore it was the responsibility of the Government to take immediate action.

"The delegates to the recent convention of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada are under the impression that the Government can enact legislation to fix prices and control the cold storage plants," said Mr. Draper. What they claim remains to be proven by the action of the Government. The question of

increased wages is now frequently discussed, and the increased prices in food has a great deal to do with the demand for higher wages. There is considerable dissatisfaction among the workers in all parts of the Dominion. It is being said that every able-bodied man in the country can get work if he wants it, but the men who are getting pinched are those who have very small wages and find that they cannot possibly live under present conditions.

Mr. Simpson: "There should be an inventory of the foodstuffs now stored in the cold storage plants of the Dominion." There is an impression that the cold storage plants are being used to influence prices and not to conserve perishable food. The demand made upon the workers to refrain from striking during the war has been well observed by the workers, but there must be an insistent demand made upon the sellers of foodstuffs to show the same spirit of patriotism, or the workers could not possibly regard it as their duty to refrain from striking. It is the duty of the Government to assist in maintaining the standard of wages if there are to be no strikes, but with the increased cost of the necessities of life there comes a corresponding reduction in wages. The worker has learned to estimate the value of wages in what they are able to buy in the market and not in the number of dollar or two-dollar bills he gets in his envelope. The British Government has been compelled to yield to public opinion and instruct the Board of Trade to institute a searching inquiry into the causes of the increased cost of living, for the purpose of preventing the reduction in the purchasing power of the wages being received by the workers."

Conscription of Wealth.

Resolution No. 27—"By Ottawa Allied Trades and Labor Association: That, whereas, the Dominion Government has enacted a Military Service Act; and, whereas, under the terms of this act, man-power alone is to be conscripted for the service of the State, and no provisions are made for the conscription of wealth; therefore, be it resolved, that this Allied Trades and Labor Association request the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, at its forthcoming convention, to immediately urge upon the Dominion Government the necessity of conscription all sources of wealth in Canada, including the mines, forest reserves, railways, and all industries that are directly or indirectly engaged in the manufacture of war supplies."

To Co-ordinate Demands.

It seems to us at the time of writing, that the widespread element of

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