

What Means This Strike?

(Continued From Page One.)

animal is concerned, has resolved itself into "The Class Struggle"—the struggle of the chattel-slave against his master, the serf against his lord, the wage-slave against the capitalist, the struggle of that class in society which produces all and owns nothing to free itself from that class which produces nothing and owns everything in sight.

And that is the struggle of which your strike is a part.

There are perhaps some among you who resent the implication that you are slaves. Some of you are perhaps still obsessed by the idea that you are "Free" laborers. Let us then investigate this free labor idea. Let us apply a test to it. You are striking for the right to use a certain method in bargaining over the sale of your labor-power. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that the class to whom you anticipate selling your labor-power refuse to bargain with you in that certain way. You will in that event, of course, refuse altogether to sell your labor-power to that class. You would naturally do that if you are "Free" laborers—unless perhaps you are in some way compelled so to do. There are those calling themselves socialists who insist that such is indeed your position—that you are actually compelled to sell your labor-power to a certain class—but no doubt these men are "Bolshevists" and mean you no good. What do you think?

I imagine comrades that most of you realize only too well that what the socialist says is no more than the truth. For you must have food to eat and clothes to wear and a roof to shelter you. And how are you to obtain these things unless you have money with which to buy them? And how can you obtain money unless you sell something? And what have you to sell but your labor-power? And to whom can you sell it but to a member of or an agent for the capitalist class? You are "Free" laborers indeed inasmuch as you are not compelled to work for any man—if you prefer to starve. You are free to starve—providing only that you do so in an orderly and democratic manner. And that is not too much to ask, surely, of any good citizen now that the world has been made quite safe for that particular kind of democracy. Indeed, your masters have been so considerate even as to provide a special police force to assist you in doing that very thing should the necessity arise.

Seriously, then, there does not seem to be any room for reasonable doubt that you are indeed compelled to sell your labor-power to the capitalist class. And I am sure that you are all quite well aware that the capitalist is by no means compelled to buy from you unless he chooses. And there are occasions upon which he does not so choose. Whereupon you immediately commence to undergo a process of slow starvation which continues until you enter into your inheritance of six feet of mother earth—or some other capitalist figures that he can use you for a while.

If these, then, be the conditions under which you exist—and I do not for one moment imagine that you will attempt to deny them—what are you but slaves? If another class control the means of subsistence which spell life or death to you what are you but slaves to that class? Free laborers you may call yourselves—citizens of a democracy if you will; nevertheless, so long as you are dependent upon the whims of a ruling class for your very means of life, you are just as much slaves as were the masons and mortar-mixers of Egypt in 1100 B.C. You are just as much in bondage as were the Israelites in Egypt. And the struggle in which you are engaged is the same age-old struggle which has been waging since the "Dawn of Civilization."

"But," I imagine I hear some of you protest, "if what you say is true it is a sorry picture you paint. If we are merely pawns in a game that has been unsuccessfully played for thousands of years, what hope have we of bettering our lot? It is a gloomy prospect you hold out."

Comrades! I want to say to you that never was the prospect brighter. For 10,000 years the working class have been fighting for emancipation and at no time has complete victory been more nearly within their grasp. Never in the whole history of civilization was a ruling class in so precarious a position as are now the ruling classes of all countries. Never in the history of capitalism was the system which exploits and oppresses you so powerless to save itself. And never in the whole history of slavery have the enslaved and disinherited of the earth shown such unmistakable signs of strength and consciousness of strength. Class solidarity—the recognition by workers of the fact that their interests are common wherever they be, and the spirit which acts upon that recognition—is growing every day, every hour.

You are striking for the recognition of the principle of collective bargaining. You are striking by the authority of a majority vote of your unions, and a majority vote of the members of those unions. Wherefore there is no doubt that this is your strike notwithstanding certain statements published in the capitalist press to the effect that you have been "bulldozed" into it by a few "Bolshevists." The issue was not raised here in Vancouver. It was brought about by the action of certain men representing the ruling class in Winnipeg.

You are striking then in "sympathy" with the workers of Winnipeg. Do you realize fully just what this means and all that it implies? You are striking in sympathy with men, you have probably never seen, men you know but little about, and whom you may never set eyes on. You have voluntarily accepted the inconveniences and hardships, which are inevitably the lot of the worker whenever the precarious income he derives from the sale of his labor-power ceases, in order to support a number of men in whom, as men, you have probably little or no interest.

Why? There is not one of you who can not answer that question without a moments hesitation. You are striking in sympathy with them because, whatever else they may be; they are members of the working class—your class—and you know that, as such, their interests are your interests, their enemies are your enemies, their fight is your fight. You know that. You realize that—now. And you act upon that conviction. That is class solidarity.

And you are not alone in your support of them. The workers in Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Toronto, Prince Rupert and perhaps, by the time this letter is in print, Victoria are also striking in sympathy with the workers of Winnipeg, and with each other. Do you realize that this is working-class solidarity of a scope that has never before been equalled in this Dominion?

Do not think the workers in other lands are indifferent to labor's efforts here. The dock-workers of Liverpool, England, have declared that they will unload no Canadian ships until the Winnipeg strike is settled. Class-solidarity is spreading beyond the confines of nationality. In England, again, The Triple Alliance, a combination of three great labor unions, has issued an ultimatum to the British Government demanding, among other things, that the war against the working-class government of Russia be stopped, and the economic blockade which is starving the workers of Europe be abandoned. Here is a manifestation of working-class solidarity of a scope hitherto unequalled in all history. Here is strength and consciousness of strength such as the master-class has never before had to reckon with. And so it goes, all over the world, thousands upon thousands of workers are striking and declaring their common interest with the working-class the world over. All over the world strikes and industrial unrest betray the determined temper of the workers and indicate the trend of events.

And you, my comrades, every one of you is doing his or her part. Every one who strikes is helping in the spread of working-class solidarity, is paving the way to class-consciousness—the realization of one's position in human society—is promoting the spread of militancy—the determination to do and

THE SOCIALIST PARTY IN AMERICA.

The Socialist Party in America is now engaged in a bitter controversy on party principles, policies and organization. The uncompromising, revolutionary elements in New York have organized as a Left Wing Section of the Party. They have printed a Manifesto and Program which has been distributed widely throughout the country. As a result of their work a large section of the country has adopted an uncompromising, revolutionary position. The comrades of the Left Wing are now being persecuted by the opportunistic officialdom in control, in the most brutal and high-handed fashion, for example:—In the City of New York, scores of branches have been expelled because they adopted the Left Wing Manifesto and Program. The State Executive Committee is about to expel the Locals of Rochester, Buffalo, Utica, Queens, and Kings, for practically the same reason. The old N. E. C. having been overwhelmingly defeated in the recent referendums throughout the country, Left Wingers being elected by an overwhelming majority, have declared the election void, have O.K.'d the action of the Executive Committee of Local New York, and the State of New York, and have expelled the following: Language Federations—comprising a membership of 40,000, the entire State of Michigan, and will proceed to expel every local and state organization throughout the country that adopts the policy against the Social Reformism in favor of the Left Wing.

OIL PROFITS.

"Striking oil" is an old phrase for making a fortune quickly. The report of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company shows that it is not out of date yet. Formed so recently as 1909, the company obtained two millions of capital from the Government in 1914, and in 1915-16, reported a profit of £135,056. Next year the profit nearly trebled, and now for 1917-18 it has reached the colossal figure of £1,308,500.

no longer passively to endure. And it is out of these three, class-consciousness, class-solidarity and militancy, that the working-class will forge the weapon which shall win its emancipation.

Meanwhile, stand firm! Refuse to be deluded by reports in the capitalist press that your comrades in other parts are weakening. **From now on the working-class will never weaken.** It may be that there will be lulls in the fighting. You yourselves may by force of circumstances be compelled to retreat a step, perhaps two. But do not let that dishearten you. Even though you are compelled to return to work without winning all you demand, do not count that as a defeat. **From now on no strike can end in a defeat.** Every strike, no matter what the outcome as regards the immediate issue may be, advances the working-class movement a step. **There will be no permanent industrial peace from now on, while capitalism continues.**

Stand firm! Do not give an inch unless you are compelled. Remember, the striking workers the world over are watching you as you are watching them. Every week, every day, every hour, you hold out, heartens them, and encourages some who have not yet found themselves.

Keep order. Be scrupulous in your regard for the law. Talk no violence, and permit none to do so. Remember you have everything to lose and nothing to gain by violence. Be on your guard against attempts to provoke you to disorder. Nothing would please your masters more, at this juncture, than an excuse for resorting to force.

And, above all, be of good heart. The working-class the wide world over is awakening from its long nightmare of degradation and misery. The great working-class giant is rising to his feet. In all countries can be heard the rattle of the chains which fetter him and which, in the coming consciousness of new found strength, he will shortly break asunder and cast from him. The dawn is breaking.

C. K.