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LESSONS OF THE STRIKE

THE central argument of the miners—equal pay for equal work—produced the demand for the national pool, and also the subsidy proposed by Hodges—a proposal which (commercially) weakened the case for the miners by exposing them to the derision of master class economics, which left them without an answer to the practical exigencies of trade, and which afforded the ruling class an opportunity—quickly taken up—of confounding and confusing the first issue.

In this confusion equal pay for equal work was conveniently forgotten. It was an excellent trade slogan. On the ethic of business it was unanswerable. It commanded consideration. It was a puzzle to the henchmen of capitalist equities. It was conceded to be eminently "fair and reasonable." Lloyd George was so hard put to it that he was driven for refuge in the "act of God" idea. But—unwittingly—friend Hodges turned the trick, demonstrating once again (if demonstration be required) that no association of slaves, however strong, incognisant of its fundamental interest—the abolition of wages—can transmute the trade mongering vicissitudes of commerce into higher standards of social betterment.

That was a serious blow to the miners. The break up of the Triple Alliance was another. We had heard much talk "about it and about," but when the strain came upon it, the Alliance wilted like a plucked flower. And for the same reason precisely: it was separated from the source of its sustenance—the sustenance of a common interest. Now wrath and its abandon are much in evidence, "treachery" and "betrayal" are frequent terms, bitterness and disgust keen and acid tongued among the disillusioned worshippers of numbers. Quite natural perhaps, but quite futile.

But the consequences may not be so futile. An organization so imposing as the Triple Alliance can hardly dissolve without producing far effects. Great stress was laid upon its power and cohesion, the "mighty works" it was to accomplish. It was almost the symbol and guarantee of the coming triumph of labor. Action and reaction being equal and opposite, the rebound can hardly be other than violent, the sense of disappointment as cuttingly deep as the enthusiasm of anticipation was passionately keen.

Yet as all things that have been, so too with this. Its strength was but an appearance, its unity an imagination. The bubble has been burst, and with its bursting there falls away from us another fallacy of idealist misconception. And that is a very real advantage, although as yet its incidence is but vaguely realized.

Disappointment may fly to egotistical extremes for a time, but material conditions must compel a return to the realities of daily existence, and out of the reaction will arise a new organization with a spirit sharpened through failure, and with an understanding vitalized with the friction of fact. And in that understanding resides impregnable power.

The stoppage of the mining industry, implying as it does, the stagnation of almost all industry, is, at the present juncture of world affairs, a serious impasse—so serious indeed, that we may almost prophesy that the lost ground can never be regained.

With the losing of that ground, will certainly follow a tenser struggle, and a deeper misery. Yet evil though that be—evil i.e., in its immediate effects on the workers—it is a necessary prelude to the new discipline and unity which must weld the exploited masses together for their emancipation from wage labor. As it clears away the status and possession of the middle classes, so also, it clears away the obsessions of the workers to their slave gods, presenting the fundamental problems, the inherent antagonism of class, in bold and unequivocal relief.

The Triple Alliance did not topple over because of its bulk—indeed, it was not large enough. It did not fail to function because it lacked discipline or ability. Nor did it stand back for want of courage or fear of consequences. Not at all. Courage and ability are in the fibre of the working class, in woven in their being by the historic development of progress. That is the backbone of every class that has ever risen to power, and in the last analysis, our hope of final victory is founded there. No. The flaw does not lie there, but in the immediate form of the organization itself.

The Triple Alliance is—or was—a more or less artificial alliance of sections of labor, united principally by the transient juxtapositions of self-interest. Like all trades unions it represented the preservation of particular interests, and as those interests are its dominating influence, on those interests it must stand. But craft interests, being patterned on trade associations, are trade interests. They are chiselled out of commercial purpose, and being so, are bounded by the adventitious circumstances of the moment. To the moving influences of the moment they must of necessity respond; to hazard an ideal is to gamble with their existence. And, by the same token they are individualistic in character—for trade needs are compelling—and as such, are grimly in conflict with the fleeting substance of industrial relationships whose conditions drive us irremediably towards sociality and collective endeavor.

That is why the Triple Alliance failed. The interests of its component elements were trade interests, unequal and diverse. They were not united on the fundamental of exploitation. The pressure put upon the miners did not affect the economic interests of the others, and until the economic interest is touched none will, or perhaps, can move.

But the lever to touch the economic interest is being steadily applied. Capitalist production has entirely lost its original individualism. The process has become a social collectivity. No one is a unit; no category stands by itself. All are irrevocably bound together, mutually interacting and dependent. What befalls one today happens to all tomorrow. Capital is world wide; its exploitation is single and complete. As single and as world wide does it engender antagonisms to itself, arousing the conditions where social necessity meets and oversteps class law, and which compel all creating labor to organize, not on craft lines for trade mongering benefits, but on the broad foundation of class unity, to carry the class struggle to victory and extinction, and society to the further and higher achievements of economic freedom.

R.

SECRETARIAL NOTES.

Comrade Leckie's articles on the "Materialist Conception of History," like his "Economic Causes of War," are commanding attention everywhere the "Clarion" is read. We have had many enquiries and appreciative references. The latest we have seen is this, from "The Socialist," Melbourne, on "E. C. of W."

"Comrade Leckie has carefully examined the available official records and other relevant documents dealing with the events leading up to the war, and lays bare the hypocritical nature of the pretension that Great Britain was motivated by purely ethical considerations in declaring war upon Germany. The writer also deals with post-war problems, and scathingly exposes the sordid hypocrisy, selfishness, and greed that has characterized Allied diplomacy since the signing of the armistice. "Economic Causes of War" may be obtained from the Socialist Party of Canada, Vancouver, B. C."

Read it and pass it on to the next man you hear asking what causes all this war talk.

Many queries have been sent here asking for the whereabouts of Comrade Lestor. He was supposed to return from England to Canada sometime during the spring of this year. As far as we know he is still in England. We have had no word during the past month. Previous to that he was in London, whence he sent us a copy of "Out of Work," dated April 9th, weekly, published by the London District Council of the Unemployed. This contains a front page article by himself, entitled "The Blooming Empire, from the Standpoint of a Red."

The comrades in the eastern provinces have been expecting Comrade Lestor for some time, and have been making arrangements for him to address meetings in various places. Better step aboard the Atlantic canoe, Charlie, and be counted in on the census.

Writing from Manchester, May 6th, Moses Baritz has this to say of the miners: "The miners 'leaders' are positively impotent, and a real new spirit pervades the union atmosphere. Unlike the N. U. R., which is dictated to by Thomas, who has run away to U. S. A. rather than face his own union which is passing resolutions of protest against his actions recently. (That means branches or locals of the union) The miners are keeping a tight grip on the bearing rein of the 'leaders.' I can tell you this with the greatest assurance, that a move is on among the high 'leaders' to try and put the South Wales Federation out of the national organization. This, of course, is not much abroad, but it was given to me from such a source that you can accept it as being correct. I have no doubt that Havelock Wilson's crowd—the Sailors and Firemen's Union—will scab on the others. The Dockers will soon be in trouble over the landing of coal from Belgium. It is hardly likely that the Dockers will tolerate that. The Transport Workers will have to join with the Dockers, and the N. U. R. will follow. Thomas can see the way things are going, and ducks by going to the States."

John A. McDonald passed through Vancouver a week ago on the way to Australia. He expects to be over there for a year or so, lecturing to the heathen of wagedom in Australia, N. Z., and South Africa.

We have no information further concerning the case of Charlie O'Brien, and when this comes under his notice he will remember that he used to wander around this big farm and made a few friends here and there. They keep on asking us if he's executed yet.

Comrade Frank Cassidy is at Seal, Alberta, and will be in Edmonton on the 1st July. Frank has been scrambling around the Alberta country during the past five or six months and in some farming areas he has managed to get a meeting several nights a week, in some cases as many as six. He has been doing this on his own initiative, without monetary outlay to the Party, and he reports good audiences and hospitality among the farmers around the country. One of these days he's going to send us a write up of his impressions of Alberta as a field for Socialist propaganda, which will be of interest to all Clarion readers and particularly Alberta readers. This is the work that counts.

Looking over this column it seems to take on the appearance of "Social and Personal," as per the vanity page in the stuffed dailies. So be it. We haven't arrived at the stage of garment description, however,—to do that might lead to several arrests. These are good intentions.

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