

EDITORIAL

SOME FIRST-HAND DEFINITIONS OF THE THEORY OF THE O.B.U.

The newspapers have contained little about the notable debate which took place in Winnipeg on August 6th between exponents of the rival doctrines of the O. B. U. and the American Federation of Labor, but it occupied the attention of three thousand persons for three hours in hot weather, and elicited some definition of O. B. U. theories that will bear quotation.

Jos. Knight, who opened the debate for the O. B. U., and who was more remarkable for his venom than his logic, said: "The O. B. U. is not a national organization. That is absurd. An organization of the working classes as a class cannot be national. . . . What has the O. B. U. done? It has permeated the mind of the working classes of Canada in a manner that they will not get over, and tomorrow the O. B. U. will have the whole thing."

The representative of the American Federation of Labor, W. H. Hoop, defending the policies of the allied craft unions said this form of organization supplied "that merit which enables the worker to pool and use his economic power within the limits of the constitution, and carries with it the dictatorship of the proletariat whenever they desire to express it at the ballot box; whereas the O.B.U., throwing aside all weapons other than the big stick of direct action, treats society as an enemy, seeking to subdue various sections by dictatorship."

John Houston, speaking for the O. B. U. quoted a conversation with a tramcar driver, who advised "All you have to do to win that debate is to point the attention of the audience to the fact that the bosses, the politicians, the newspapers, and all the organizations and institutions of society are against the O. B. U. If the working class cannot see that an organization which meets with all that hostility is in their interests, then they cannot see anything at all." Mr. Houston's own point of view he stated to be a firm belief "that when a man takes part in the Labor movement, and while doing so he enters into relations or bargains or receives any favors from the bosses, he is a traitor to the working class."

The speakers of course said much more, but the quotations selected sufficiently disclose the fatal gulf between those who desire to mend society as it is now constituted, and those who desire to end it. Mr. Knight and his confreres have correctly diagnosed the O. B. U. movement as the deadly enemy of "the institutions of society" and as anti-national. This

gentleman, in his rebuttal speech, said further: "Oh fellow-workers, the simplicity of the whole thing! Here you are, the workers of Winnipeg. You organize in your own units. Express yourself through your Council, and the workers of Winnipeg will have control of their own affairs. There it is in simplicity—the O. B. U."

"Their own affairs"—and, everybody else's. We grant the simplicity, but there's the rub.

Those who advocate the complete domination of the "working classes" also arrogate to themselves the definition of the term, accompanying their advocacy with a denial of the right of any other class to exist. When they also postulate that all those are traitors who enter into communication with those inhabitants of the world that are not included within the self-determined definition of workers, they disclose themselves as the relentless and irreconcilable enemies of society. Can society, the general community of mankind, which includes the workers and all others be blamed if it recognises its would-be assassin and defends itself?

The A. F. L. speaker said the O. B. U. was "out to smash the State," and that when "the nature of the real thing was seen by the State, there could be no compromise." Which seems to be a fair expression of the position and responsibility of the State towards "all the organizations and institutions of society" that the O. B. U. conceives to be the enemy of the worker.

INCREASED RAILWAY CHARGES.

The apologists for increased railway charges are making use of rather far-fetched instances to illustrate how lightly the increases of railway rates will be felt. Elaborate calculations are being made on the increased freight charges upon a tailored suit of woollen goods, and other finished articles whose value consists much more in labor than in material cost.

It is not in package freight and express shipments that increased railway rates will be most fundamental and widespread, but in the effect of increased rates upon heavy raw materials shipped in bulk, such as coal, iron-ore, petroleum, and bulk foodstuffs.

An increased freight charge upon coal will successively and cumulatively add to the cost of every manufactured article at every progressive stage of manufacture. The manufactured articles into which the cost of coal does not enter, and enter very largely, are completely negligible. In fixing freight rates, therefore, it is desirable that the least possible increase shall