

You Can't Put Back the Clock

permanency in their employment if the majority of them judge rightly on difficult questions put to them by national political parties and national or international trade unions."

Discussing influences which menace the cohesion of this society, he says, "(But), owing to the very complexity of the relations which bind us to The Great Society, we stand to lose much more by any failure in its cohesion than did the subjects of the ancient empires. Up till our time the vast majority of the inhabitants of the world lived in little almost self-supporting villages. If an empire broke up, some of these villages might be wasted by war; but the rest, like the cells of a divided rotifer, grouped themselves easily enough as part of a new body. If, at the capital of the empire, a population had been brought together which depended on a more intricate form of social organization, that population was destroyed or scattered. Some day the Assyriologists will reconstruct for us the industrial and financial system, which enabled the inhabitants of Nineveh or Babylon to be fed and employed, and then we shall be able to imagine the sufferings which left those cities mere piles of ruins surrounded by a few peasants' huts. When the corn-ships of Egypt and the tribute money of Gaul and Spain ceased to come to Rome, the population of the city sank from about a million to perhaps a third of that number. But now, thirty-five out of forty-five million inhabitants of Great Britain depend for their food upon a system of world-relations far more complex than that which was built up by Assyria or Rome for the supply of their capitals. . . ."

The world has been transformed. What we find in this transformed world must determine our reasoning on the problem of change.

I rest my case against the doctrine of violence upon reasoning based on an analysis of the present social situation. But I also contend that the past had also other ways and means of change, as the future may have. I have in previous articles pointed to English history where privilege and power have been transformed or abolished without a resort to arms, peaceful victories for the burgesses of the towns in the middle ages, or, for the manufacturing and commercial interests in the 19th century, the abolition of the Corn Laws. This latter case is one well-known modern instance, when the land-owning class, the farming community and the country town populations submitted to the will of a superior public opinion expressing itself by constitutional means. The constitutional history of Europe during the middle ages also illustrates the possibilities that lie in representation by the group system based on definite economic interests and by which common policies were evolved by the method of give and take. That social experiment runs counter to the theory that minority groups can have no influence on state policies and that, therefore, the revolutionary movement or a party broadly labor is wasting its time or diverting the interest and energies of the worker along futile channels in constitutional political activities. Whether the wage workers as an economic group, if they had been fully represented as such in all the parliaments of Europe, would have staved off the world war is a matter of speculation; but this is sure, that they had no such representation, and, further, the world war brought no one any good, not anyone, except it be to reactionary forces. The workers are less predatory by interest and inclination than the business-like bourgeoisie; on that score alone I would give them a chance.

By the by, can anyone make a digest of census returns giving the numerical standing of the industrial proletariat proper in relation to all other groups in Canada and the United States? We need some knowledge got by the case method; more facts to test our received generalizations.

However, my argument is in previous issues. Here, for general educational intent, I have traversed rapidly some of the ground again of my position. Believing my critic shot his bolt beside the mark

"What are the common wages of labor depends everywhere upon the contract usually made between those two parties, whose interests are by no means the same. The workmen desire to get as much, the masters to give as little as possible. The former are disposed to combine in order to raise, the latter in order to lower the wages of labor."

Adam Smith: "The Wealth of Nations." Chapter 8.

OLD time residents of the City of Vancouver, recalling their experiences in the early days of settlement in this last great west, every other day voice their regret at the demolition of some familiar landmark associated in their memories with the pioneer days, the days when the community was still young, when the spirit of the frontier was abroad, when man helped man and human association suffered no unnatural restrictions.

In those days, early and late, great corporation influences had not yet fallen upon the community or, if they had, they had come under the appearance of service in development, in opening up new territory, in linking the new lands of the west with the old lands of the east, in providing transportation across the great lands of the interior.

It is not our purpose here to follow intimately the course of development of that old time community. Rather, it is our purpose to indicate the initial circumstances under which, in the life history of all communities which have grown up in the machine age, there has developed the concept of public utility as applied to the great corporations. Briefly, then, these combinations first appear as community benefactors. Later, through the hold they acquire in all avenues of activity, it becomes manifest that they hold the industrial life of the community in their hands, up to the point, at least, where, in the exercise of monopoly power they restrict further expansion, whereupon there develops the point of view that the public utility of the past has invoked its power to present public disadvantage.

In such a developing community, with the growth of industry, the opening up of business enterprise in mining, lumbering, general machine production and the extension of commerce, there arise trade associations and manufacturers' associations of one sort and another, for the promotion of mutual interest and protection. At the same time there arise combinations of workmen, wage-workers, likewise for mutual protection. There has never yet arisen any industrial community without the appearance of such associations on both sides.

Without doubt it will appear strange to the intelligent reader of this Bulletin that in this enlightened age we should suppose the bright inhabitants of the City of Vancouver to be without a working knowledge of such commonplace matters. But it would appear that while Vancouver has developed industrially to the point where the port has established itself importantly in present day economic geography, while "the business people up town" have been "watching Vancouver grow," they have suffered a grievous decline in culture in so far as that term denotes ability in critical analysis, industrial and social.

"Up town" we have our Babbits, for in all things we are modern. "Up town" we have all manner of club men, merchant men, real estate men, professional men. We have, too, our publicity agents, our advertising men and our men of the press. As may suit their momentary interests, these latter betray the ravages of intellectual Hookworm as the occasion may arise and as the price may meet the need. Our "up town" culture is the culture of the booster. It appears as shallow as our community singing is oft-times out of tune. "Up town," too, we have our university, an institution which increasingly commends itself to our good opinion, in view of the apparent, moral turpitude of certain of its literary critics.

"Up town" our business community finds activity in its varied occupational and professional channels, and it totals its pleasures in terms of cash. In such pursuits its whole attention is employed, so much so that when there arise extra matters for consideration in City life—strikes

when he ignored the grounds of my argument against the feasibility of a violent overturn, I hope he may be induced to study my position and shoot directly at it, or, peradventure, discover its impregnability.

Our different reasoning upon the problem of change I see as based upon different valuations we put upon the present. His reasoning is fairly representative of a body of revolutionary opinion, or perhaps more properly, a state of mind having little curiosity and thus easily held in bondage by dogma.

I hope to carry on, if opportunity affords, my war on this state of mind and on all its philosophic rationalizing. Or so I kid myself.

for instance—it has recourse to the press for information and general guidance. Through the growth of institutions side by side in the same community, through trade relationship and commercial contact, it is quite easy to account for the first impulse of almost all business elements to side with the employing interests in the time of industrial strife, rather than with wage workers. But first impulses are subject to change, particularly as the result shows itself in the day's cash returns, and presently there appears a desire for a deeper understanding.

In the present event, among the business elements—the merchants—there appears missing the payroll of a considerable body of men whose earnings must always add volume to the general store sales. This is the point where serious enquiry into the nature and causes of the strike must—and does—manifest itself in the daily press. In the present case, the Vancouver waterfront dead lock is accredited the immediate cause of local business depression. The initiative in forcing a strike as the outcome of prolonged negotiations is generally—and correctly—placed upon the elements who comprise the Shipping Federation.

A careful examination of all the public declarations of the Shipping Federation yields convincing evidence that that body intends to destroy the Union. Yet they hold the right to maintain intact their own Federation. We have opened this article with a quotation from "The Wealth of Nations," an 18th century classic, a treatise on political economy which even our "up town" friends will recognize to have been tolerably well recommended. In Adam Smith's day combination of workmen in unions was illegal, yet the development of industry and the increasing sub-division of labor set down the circumstances wherein combination of workmen on one hand, and of employers on the other, inevitably brought forth recognition and became established. From that day to this bargaining over wages and working conditions has necessarily been conducted between employers' associations and workmen's unions, and with the continued circumstances prevailing in industry there can be no suggestion from any serious mind that union recognition should be withdrawn. These facts being apparent, it should be apparent also that you can't put back the clock. Yet if even only covertly set forth in its pronouncements, we gather that the Shipping Federation would snap its fingers at all essentially recognized economic factors, past and present, and abolish at its will and pleasure recognition of the union.

It would appear that this Bulletin has found something of a welcome in the City of Vancouver, serving as it does, as a medium whereby we set forth our analysis of the circumstances leading up to and at present prevailing in this industrial dispute. From a survey of the multitude of periodicals representative of the various business associations in the City we gather that the position of the International Longshoremen's Association, if not altogether openly acknowledged favourably, is yet quietly commended. It has come to be recognized that the great corporation, the public utility of the early days, has taken toll in too large a measure and has developed the characteristics of public hindrance. The public utility has come to light as a deeply entrenched vested interest which would exercise a detrimental influence in a situation which every day threatens to outgrow it.

Machiavelli in his day set forth three orders in intelligence as exemplified, first, in the man who looks at surrounding circumstances and accordingly develops his ideas. Second, the man who, unable to develop his own ideas in this way is yet receptive to ideas conveyed by the first. And third, the man who is not receptive at all.

We release this Bulletin for public reading, confident that it has found its welcome already in each house where intelligence prevails.

—Longshoremen's Strike Bulletin

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