

# FRIENDS OF LABOR

ENTERPRISES THAT HAVE SHOWN A FRIENDLY ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WORKING CLASS

## RUSSIAN PEASANTRY BLANK AND BRUTAL

Bolshevism may be bad enough, but on the Russian horizon looms another figure, which, at least as seen through the eyes of one of the most famous of living Russians, appears quite as terrible. Maxim Gorky, the writer, himself risen from the drags of the old Russian civilization, presents the Russian peasant to the world as a crowning type of brutality. The Russian novelist and playwright, himself more or less of a Bolshevik in spite of having been frequently in conflict with the Bolshevik authorities for his unorthodox opinions, has lately written an extended study of his peasant countrymen, which is published in translation in the Revue Bleue of Paris.

The Russian peasant in his loneliness, in his lack of variety, tends to be blank and brutal in mind. His labor is performed in the most primitive manner. It is very difficult and wearing, so that, in the Russian language, the same verb means both to labor and to suffer. He sees the contrast between the burden of his fatigue and the insignificant results of his toil, and it reinforces in him the instinct of private property and contentment almost entirely the influence of the doctrines which describe all human life to the power of the instinct. He cannot think in terms of great cities or great factories, great museums or great parks and theatres, built by the co-operation of many people. He retires into his own little hut, after his day of hard, solitary labor is completed, soaks himself in alcohol as often and as thoroughly as possible, and dreams much of his life away in a kind of melancholia.

Cruelty, which Gorky finds an outstanding characteristic of the peasant nature, may be explained in part by the fact that the Russian peasant seems to have evolved very little from the type of man common over most of Europe in the early middle ages. The writer speaks of having read a book "The Progress and Evolution of Cruelty." However, he continues: "I am obliged to remark that there has been no evolution in Russian cruelty—apparently it has undergone a change in form. A chronicler writing at the beginning of the seven-

teenth century relates that in his time torture was performed in Russia in the following manner: Gun powder was poured in the mouth of the victim and then touched off. Women had their throats pierced and were then strung up by a rope passed through the wounds. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the same thing was done in the territories of the Don and the Ural. A dynamite cartridge was inserted in the body of a victim and then exploded. I am of opinion that if the English people is original in its sense of humor, the Russian people is original in its peculiar sense of cruelty—a cold-blooded cruelty which seeks to test the capacity of man, to the last gasp and thus to reveal the tenacity of the vital force.

In Russian cruelty one is conscious of something delicate and exquisite of a diabolic search for perfection as a rule. One cannot explain it by words such as "psychic abnormality" or "sadism" which indeed, explain nothing per se. I have asked myself now and then whether this is not a defect produced by alcoholism, and then I have said to myself that the Russian race is no more poisoned by alcoholism than the other European races, though it may be that the alcoholic poison reacts more strongly upon the mind of the poorly fed Russian peasant than upon those of men in countries where food is plentiful and varied. It is possible, too, that the reading of "The Lives of the Martyrs"—a pastime much favored by those persons in the villages who are able to read—has played some part in the Russian genius for cruelty.

## TO DISSENT FROM THE FEDERAL VIEW ON UN- EMPLOYMENT.

Emphatic protests will be made by Winnipeg civic and provincial authorities against the view taken by federal government that unemployment is now back to normal and that the cost of relief this winter should be borne by the provincial and municipal governments. While unemployment conditions in Winnipeg and urban districts show an improvement over last winter, officials here contend that they are still abnormal and the contention is made that the federal government has failed in pledges given at the unemployment conference held in Ottawa last September.

## BRITISH PREMIER NOT OLD OFFICE

### First Prime Minister Assumed Title Only Two Hundred Years Ago.

When all the world is interested in the accession of a new British Premier, as happens in these after war days, it is interesting to note that in England Prime Ministers are "a comparatively modern institution." We are so accustomed to think of the political machinery of the British Isles as dating back too far in the past to bear remembrance, that the information that this office is only about two hundred years old comes with surprise. The Hon. Clive Bigham reminds us that in the days of the Norman and the Plantagenet monarchs, the King himself directed and carried on the government of the country by the advice of his council. This he did through his officers and largely from his own revenues. Usually he chose these officers himself, though at times they were "forced upon him." In "The Prime Minister of Britain" this informant further relates:

"For the most part they were priests, the medieval ecclesiastics possessing considerable advantages over laymen in the way of education and of freedom from family ties. They often rose to great power, and rivalled the King himself. . . . But after the Wars of the Roses nearly all of the old families had disappeared. When Henry VII. came to the throne the lay peers totalled only 29, one-third of what their number had been a hundred and fifty years earlier. The influence of the Church also was diminishing, whilst two new classes, the landed gentry and the city merchants, were rapidly becoming more literate and acquiring importance. The names of Howard, Seymour, Cecil, Cavendish, and Russell now first rise into prominence and the House of Commons is really beginning to count."

Nevertheless, the Sovereign was still paramount, presiding at his Council and personally selecting his ministers. But under the Stuarts this choice became more restricted and it was soon "distinctly limited to Members of either House of Parliament." With the Restoration came further changes and it is pointed out that Ministers were obliged to pay more attention as well as considerable gratification to the members of the House of Commons while even the King used to go down to the House of Lords and try to influence their decisions. In 1688 the arbitrary power of the Crown was definitely checked, Parliament became "almost supreme" and a certain responsibility was compelled from the administration. King William, who acted largely as his own Minister, took an active and constant part in the government, but Queen Anne devolved more and more of her duties upon her councillors. Then a fresh development came.

"A foreign prince succeeded to the throne. Entirely dependent on the good-will of a parliamentary majority, and speaking hardly any English, he could not effectively control that committee of the Council which was gradually growing into a Cabinet. He was averse to political business and became attached to a single Minister. This Minister, who led the Commons, was also a leader of the Whigs, and was supported by the great Families of the Revolution. Gradually he took the first place amongst his colleagues, communicating the royal commands to them, and their views to the Sovereign. From this to a more precise position was but a short step, and the regular series of Prime Ministers is regarded as beginning with Sir Robert Walpole's appointment to the office of First Lord of the Treasury, in April, 1721."

One reason that the Prime Minister has presided over the Treasury, it appears, is that its patronage was always so great, that, according to Fox, "whoever filled it must have much more power than any other member of the Cabinet." But Mr. Clive Bigham gives another reason for the Prime Minister's control of the Treasury: the fact that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Treasury furnished the secret service money, and one of its principal men was for bribes to members of Parliament; and, "as Fox justly remarked, no Minister could lead the House of Commons without being informed on this question." Indeed, the actual management of the House was so closely connected with the Treasury that the Patronage Secretary and the Junior Lords have gradually developed into the chief and other whips of the Ministry.

At times the Prime Minister has presided over another department; but, speaking generally, for two hundred years the position of the head of the government has been united with that of First Lord of the Treasury. The exceptions are Lord Chatham, who was Lord Privy Seal, and Lord Salisbury, who was successively Foreign Secretary and Lord Privy Seal on two occasions while leading an administration.

## LABOR POLITICS IN UNITED STATES

An attempt to form an American Labor Party was made on December 11, 1922, at Cleveland, by a conference of delegates representing Farmer, Socialist and Trade Unionist Organizations. The idea was to launch a National Labor Party, similar to that of England, but it was decided to defer organization for the present. The United States already has a Socialist Party which has been in existence for a long time, but has not made much headway. There is also a Farmer-Labor Party organized about two years ago; its activities have been mainly centered in the Middle West, and as yet is more of a sentiment than a force. Then there is the American Workers' Party, mainly composed of Communists and I. W. W.'s; it met in New York the other day and achieved the line of march by sending a message to Lenin, asserting that the United States was getting ready to overthrow capitalism and set up communism.

Another organization through which American labor seeks to exercise political influence is the A. F. of L. National Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee. In a recent report on the work of this committee President Sam Gompers of the A. F. of L. says it secured tremendous victories in the November elections. This report claims that the committee secured the election of 170 friends of Labor, viz.: Democrats 105, Republicans 62, Farmer-Labor; Independents 1. The Committee recommends that it be authorized in the name of the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. to endeavor to bring about the cooperation of all Labor and Progressive groups, so that there may be unity of action to protect and promote the rights and interests of the working people and the people generally. It is reported that one of the reasons why the Cleveland Conference adjourned without taking definite action was to see what will be the outcome of the proposed move of the A. F. of L. But it is apparently not the intention of President Gompers and his advisors to form an independent Labor Party for his report upon the November elections says:

"It is my conviction that by alert interest in political affairs and with a constant devotion and partizan to principles without regard to party, we can materially advance the interests of the workers. The unity of opinion throughout our movement in this regard is most gratifying, and it is that unity upon which all of our success must rest."

## DUTCH IMMIGRANTS ARE EXPECTED

Although economic conditions in Europe are not most favorable to all aspects of immigration, the Acting Minister of that Department, Hon. Charles Stewart, and his assisting staff are putting forth every effort to obtain a very substantial influx this year. To that end, it is announced, offices are opened anew or reopened at Paris, Antwerp, Dantzig, Warsaw and Bucharest. Simultaneously extensive propaganda is being initiated in the Scandinavian countries and in Holland. From the last mentioned a good sized immigration to Canada is assured this year, according to advisers from governmental authorities there. In the British Isles the work is already under way.

Next week's conference here between the federal immigration authorities and representatives of the provincial governments is designed to have an important bearing upon activities of this year. The desire of the Dominion government is to regulate the influx of immigrants proportionately to the provincial capacity to assimilate. Before asking people to emigrate from the other side, it is desired to know just how many can be absorbed, where specifically they can be located, and in what particular line of work they can engage with the best prospect. With this knowledge beforehand there will be no trouble in obtaining as many as can be taken care of; but there is to be no programme of "hit or miss."

Immigration contemplated this year will not be restricted to the agricultural classes and domestic workers, though to them the preference will be given. There is a need for other kinds of labor, and one thing that occasions it is the heavy influx of skilled artisans in 1922 to the United States, where, in some of the building trades, the hourly wage goes as high as \$2 with higher rates still for overtime.

A compensating movement of American agriculturists is in prospect from the western states, and for this plan were recently outlined at a conference in Chicago attended by the Hon. Charles Stewart.

At the coming session of Parliament certain amendments to the immigration Act are probable, but, in general, the programme now being initiated is a matter of elastic regulation authorized by the act as it stands.

## FOREST FIRES RUIN FUR TRADE

Mr. Angus Brabant, Fur Trade Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company and an authority on fur and timber conditions in Canada, declares that forest fires have done so much damage that the fur trade of the Dominion is threatened. It is not only that are being destroyed, he explains, the millions of dollars worth of trees but the areas where the best fur-bearing animals thrive are rapidly becoming restricted. If the waste keeps on Canada will lose one of its greatest industries much sooner than most people might think possible.

Mr. Brabant, writing in The Illustrated Canadian Forestry Magazine, points out that it is in the most densely wooded districts that the finest furs are obtained, and he has noted the decline in the company's returns from areas which were formerly thickly covered but are now devastated regions. The losses to the fur trade resulting from forest fires is appalling. Mr. Brabant adds, and trappers, traders, cutters, dyers, garment makers and many thousand of other workers suffer accordingly.

It is encouraging to learn from Mr. Brabant that no forest fires are ever started through carelessness on the part of the men employed by the Hudson's Bay Company. All these employees, whites and Indians, are "scrupulously careful with fires in the bush," because they know what the awful result of a great bush fire is, and how easy it is to prevent it. "It is," says Mr. Brabant, "among the newer generations of Canadians, the campers, hunters, tourists and other transients who find their way into the woods that the need for education in matters pertaining to fire prevention is most urgently required." These people do not start fires maliciously, but too few of them are careful. They leave smouldering fires in the woods thinking they will die out in a few minutes. But a breeze comes up suddenly, fans the abandoned camp fire into a blaze and soon the flames are sweeping over a vast acreage.

Canada's fire loss is a heavy burden on the taxpayers of the country, and if any taxpayers has not stopped to think about it he should do so forthwith. For it is obvious that millions of dollars of our most valuable assets cannot be wiped out year after year without the people paying for it, directly or indirectly. It is a case where negligence is criminal.

## WOMEN TO RECEIVE \$14 MINIMUM WAGE

Edmonton. — Fourteen dollars a week is the wage to prevail in Alberta as the minimum for women industrial workers. The government has adopted the recommendations of the minimum wage board to that effect and the new wage scale will be effective after the first of April next.

There will be a maximum working week for women workers of 48 hours, and it is also ruled that no more than 25 per cent. of female employees may be classed as apprentices. Special classifications have been made for the several industries, the periods for learning varying in the different trades.

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## PROTEST REDUCTION IN WORKING HOURS

### Union of Shopmen Carries Com- plaint to Sir Henry Thornton.

Local carmen, along with thousands of brother workers throughout Canada, are carrying their protest against the short week of 40 hours to Ottawa. Joseph Corbett, representative in this city, is today in Ottawa in conference with Sir Henry Thornton, president of the Canadian National Railways.

They have been working on a 44 hour week, and only a short time ago they were given to understand that this time schedule would be continued through out the winter. They have been officially notified, however, that beginning tomorrow (Saturday) the shops are to be closed in the morning. The afternoon is a half holiday anyway.

The loss to the men is terrific as over 700 employees in this city alone are affected. The wage cut per man each month will be about \$9.60. It is likely that a mass meeting of local carmen will be called for Monday night when the whole matter will be discussed and resolutions passed.

At the present time there is no action open to the carmen except abject surrender to the order. Mr. Corbett will lay the case of the carmen before the officials of the road and some means of arbitration may be decided upon.

## INDUSTRIES AND TRADE WITH AFRICA

### Brantford Manufacturers Ar- range Interviews With Com- missioner Egan to Discuss Proposition.

Brantford.—That Brantford manufacturers intend to take a greater interest in export trade this year is evidenced by the number of applications for interviews with Canadian Government trade commissioners who will visit the city in the near future under the auspices of the chamber of commerce.

W. J. Egan, trade commissioner for South Africa, will be in Brantford February 1, and many representative business men have made arrangements to have him discuss export trade with that country with them. He will also address the Rotary Club at their luncheon February 1.

P. W. Ward, commissioner at Singapore and representing the Canadian Government in British Borneo, Straits Settlements, Netherlands, East Indies and Siam, will also visit the city next month and will give information concerning the export possibilities to these countries for local manufacturers.

Licenses for city and county motor vehicles are expected to reach Brantford shortly. The 1923 markers are the reverse of 1922's in respect of the color, the background being black instead of white, while the figures and letters are white.

The word "Ontario" appears under the license number instead of that of the side. The same scale of license fees will be in vogue this year, and in addition every motorist will be required to pay \$1 for the plates.

The department expects to net about \$250,000 from this additional charge, which will be used in the maintenance of Ontario's good roads system. In other places the issuance of licenses has been handed over to motor clubs, but no word has been received of any change here.

Two more aldermen were sworn in at the city hall Wednesday afternoon, these being A. J. J. Fisher and James D. Ansell, both from Ward 5. All members of the 1923 council must be sworn in before they can take their seats at the inaugural meeting next Monday morning.

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