

## MAKING THE WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY

President Wilson in his "making the world safe for democracy," has coined one of the most illusory catch-phrases on record. It is world wide in its application, hypnotic in suggestion, implies so much and means so little. Unfortunately for society, the masses, always intent on the spectacular, have taken this phrase, as they have taken so much else of the sensational at its face value. And this in spite of the plainest of evidence of the many and significant class reservations on that utterance. What does this phrase mean, that flows so glibly from the tongues of those, whom we have every reason to suspect?

There is but one method of unravelling a problem with a great estimate of the value and a clear understanding of the meaning of the symbols employed. Without that understanding words are but mere shadowy spectres in the mist-vaile of speculation. In the above quotation the word democracy demands our attention. What is democracy? What does it signify?

According to public sentiment and in the last resort that sentiment is the final appeal, irrevocable if the public have all the facts, Democracy is a system of society where the control of affairs is vested in the people. This definition itself involves some further definition in the matter of terms. What is society? Society taken in its entirety, is an aggregation of the people of a country, held together by a common general interest or aim. What does it mean to vest control of anything in anyone? To invest control in a body is to endow that body with powers, approved by society and delegated from society, the fountain of all such powers, for the control of the object for which society has united. A society ordered on such terms, plainly must derive the advantages flowing from that organization. What now is this common general object of organized society—this general communion applicable to all of society? Precisely the same thing as the common general object of each unit within that society, i.e., obtaining the wherewithal to support life. That is the object, around which society is aggregated and held together. Now let us return to democracy. Democracy, as already pointed out, is a system of society, whose control of affairs is vested in the people, democracy therefore signifies that the society of the people through its appointed institutions, controls the means of obtaining the necessities of life, since the method of obtaining those means, constitutes the affairs of society, constitutes the major portion of all social activity.

Without quibbling on the matter, society in this sense, means the whole body of the people and again without quibbling, to control any subject matter, is to possess supreme rights over that subject matter, since without such rights no control is possible. The western nations are all regarded as and proclaim themselves to be democracies, their institutions and their constitutions, indeed their entire organization ranked as democratic, their people a democratic people, nurtured into beauty and bravery

under the balmy skies of freedom. Let us bring those democracies into the limelight and see if this is so.

The means of life signify the resources of a country, the raw material of production, the land and all it produces and contains, the machinery for converting the raw material into products for consumption and for distribution. It is notoriously untrue, therefore to say that the control of the means of life in those democracies is vested in the people. Manifestly such control resides in one particular section of the people, to the exclusion of all the rest, who can have access to the one necessary means, only on the condition imposed by the necessity of that class. Democracy, therefore, as it is popularly understood and accepted, the necessity of producing at a profit, is evidently not of that type symbolized by crosses and eagles.

What then do the politicians of those nations mean by making the world safe for democracy? Obviously it can only mean, making the world safe for the particular brand of democracy which obtains in those countries, i.e., capitalist democracy. But capitalist democracy is a contradiction in terms and for that reason it is either an absurdity or a travesty.

Democracy, as we have seen, implies social ownership and control of the means of life, or words are merely the paraphernalia of jugglery and therefore it is a travesty of fact to say that modern democracies are democratic. President Wilson's ideal is on analysis, nothing more than the common and sordid and visionless ideal of human slavery, the ideal of capitalist "property right" in life essentials of society. And the people who have followed that watchword heroically in the enthusiasm of an idea—and a mighty idea—but also, blindly in the credulity of simplicity, have struggled and bled and died, merely to perpetuate their own appalling subjugation.

There is one way only of making democracy a certainty, viz., the social ownership and control of those things common and essential to all existence. Capitalist war cannot bring this consummation, nor will it arise out of capitalist war, since capital will not imperil its own interest. Nor can capital be reformed out of existence, or idealistically persuaded to loosen its grip on its "property right." It must be put away. But to put it away we must understand class society, our enslaved position therein, the manner of our exploitation. Knowing that we can oppose our wisdom to capitalist cunning, our knowledge to capitalist coercion, our dialectic to be presumed right and the necessity arising out of the economic of social production devolving upon the producing class, on penalty of starvation will not only give us the weapons to fight with, but it will indicate the method as well. In this historic condition it will be no petty class rule, interest, no shifting class idealism, neither the subterfuge of illusion, nor the flattery of tinsel "honors" that will check or deviate or impede, the deliberate, but irresistible march of the coming revolution.

When capital has been abolished, when we have organized a system of social distribution in conformity with social production and profit gives place to use; when administration of our social affairs, vested in ourselves and therefore for our need

## Reflections on the Strike

(William Stewart, in "Forward")

HERE is, and will be, much discussion about the events which led up to the railway strike, and many attempts to apportion responsibility and blame.

The one important fact is that the strike has taken place. The responsibility for it rests with the Capitalist system. The Capitalist system is day by day proving itself to be unworkable. That fact was demonstrated on the most stupendous scale in 1914, when war broke out in Europe, and during the succeeding five years, when the Capitalist system had either to be suspended or modified in all countries engaged in the war. The attempts being made to set the Capitalist system on its legs again are the cause of the industrial unrest. The railway strike is only one of the manifestations of the impossibility of Capitalism. The ironfounders' strike is another. The steelworkers' strike in America is another. All these strikes will pass. The strikers in each case may even be apparently defeated, but that will not rehabilitate Capitalism.

Lloyd George talks grandiloquently of a new world, but when the miners and the railwaymen submit their contributions towards the architecture of the new world, he meets their proposals with "all the forces of the Crown." He preaches cantingly about "Brotherhood," but when the conditions under which brotherhood can prevail are submitted he calls out the military; and he doesn't realize that though he may evade and dodge the claim of the miners, though he may defeat the railwaymen, he will then have done—nothing. The problem will remain. The problem of making a system workable which is unworkable. Lloyd George can not do it: his Government can not do it. No Government that the future may give us will be able to do it. The railway strike, whatever its immediate results, is not a finality. It is only a symptom, a temporary phase. So was the miners' threatened strike early in the year, and the Coal Commission which followed. So are all the other Labor disputes.

The real danger lies in the attitude of the present governing classes towards these signs of the times. It is the attitude of people who are either stupid or ignorant, or wicked. Perhaps all three. The war-time talk about the common interests of all classes has stopped. The worker claiming a human standard of life is no longer a "patriot." He is no longer the "backbone of the nation." Rich and poor are no longer hand-

and use and well-being, is established in the place of usurping government; then with the abolition of class ownership, class distinctions will disappear; with the abolition of wages, poverty will vanish; with the abolition of capitalist private property, conflict will be eliminated and on the new foundation of that economic freedom, a new society will arise, whose base will be the whole wide world; its power, the pinnacle of human achievement; its interest, the sanctity of human life and whose ethic in truth and in fact will make the world safe for democracy. R.

and-glove. Of course, they never were, but they were assumed to be—for a time. All that pretence has dropped. It has served its purpose, and now there is open and undisguised hostility towards the claims of Labor. The miners and their leaders are Bolsheviks. The railwaymen are Anarchists. All of them except those who lie silent in France and Flanders—though even from their graves these may yet speak terrifyingly to Capitalism. When Bonar Law in an unguarded moment threatened the miners with force, the Capitalist House of Commons cheered joyously. He disavowed the threat, but he couldn't recall those revealing cheers. When Lloyd George prepares for the railway strike as for an armed campaign the Capitalist Press cheers him also. These are the ominous indications of the spirit of the governing class, now fully aware that its right to govern is being challenged by other methods than those of the ballot box.

The present writer has nothing to say concerning these methods. The workers will choose their methods for achieving their ends according to varying circumstances, which may sometimes be determined for them by their enemies. There is reason to believe that this has been the case in this railway dispute, and that the Government believe they can deal with the railwaymen more effectively now than at the end of the year. The immovable, almost challenging, attitude of Lloyd George and Geddes in last week's negotiations gives ground for that belief. And in that connection there arises the other question: Why was it necessary for the railwaymen to negotiate with Lloyd George last week? Why not with William Adamson, or Arthur Henderson, or Ramsay MacDonald? The reason is plain. The railwaymen, with the miners and other workers, elected Lloyd George last December to the position of supreme authority in this country. They elected him and his class in preference to the men of their own class. Now, when they seek to bring about, not a revolution, but merely a reasonable standard of life for themselves, it is with Lloyd George they have to negotiate. And it is with his ultimatum they have to deal. They elected him. Having rejected the political weapon last December, they now take up the industrial weapon. I have nothing to say about that. They have a right to choose the weapon they think most useful. But I can not help thinking that the industrial method would have been more effective at this moment if they had made use of the political method last December. Perhaps the strike would have been rendered unnecessary. That is the belief of those of us who urge the workers to use their votes for the acquirement of political power. If the votes are given for Capitalists then it is the Capitalists who possess the political power. They are now using it to the detriment of the railwaymen and all the workers and for the prolongation of the system whereby they live. That system is doomed, but it looks as if in its death-struggle there will be much suffering for humanity. Yet it need not be. I wish the workers would get sense more quickly.