

THE RED FLAG

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Why Are You Out of Work?

"On the Nature and Uses of Sabotage."—By
Thorstein Veblen

We give below a part of an article, under the above caption, contained in the New York "Dial," of April 15.

Veblen is an ex-professor of economics of an American university, one of many who a short time back lost their chairs for refusing to sacrifice their convictions on the economics of capitalism, to the vested interests who dictate the policies of those halls of learning. He is now one of the associate editors of the "Dial," one of the very best of the organs of Liberal thought. A master of irony, in his quiet, dry, humorous way of presenting the matter of his subject, he makes such play with his Marxian logic that he gets his rapier point home unexpectedly to the reader, and in unexpected places. He is always worth reading.

"Sabotage," he says, "is a derivative of 'Sabot,' which is French for a wooden shoe. It means going slow, with a dragging, clumsy movement, such as that manner footgear may be expected to bring on. So it has come to describe any manoeuvre of slowing down, inefficiency, bungling, obstruction. In American usage the word is very often taken to mean forcible obstruction, destructive tactics, industrial frightfulness, incendiarism and high explosives, although that is plainly not its first meaning nor its common meaning. Nor

is that its ordinary meaning as the word is used among those who have advocated a recourse to sabotage as a means of enforcing an argument about wages or conditions of work. The ordinary meaning of the word is better defined by an expression which has latterly come into use among the I. W. W., 'conscientious withdrawal of efficiency'—although that phrase does not cover all that is rightly to be included under this technical term.

"The sinister meaning which is often attached to the word in American usage, as denoting violence and disorder, appears to be due to the fact that the American usage has been shaped chiefly by persons and newspapers who have aimed to discredit the use of sabotage by organized workmen and who have therefore laid stress on its less amiable manifestations. This is unfortunate. It lessens the usefulness of the word by making it a means of denunciation rather than of understanding."

He then goes on to show some of its wider and no doubt to many indiscriminating innocents, unsuspected applications and practices, legal and moral within the bourgeois code, because necessary to the preservation of the bourgeois system of production for profit. We regret to have to skip drastically much of his article, for lack of space. The captions, heading paragraphs, are our own.

Control of the Rate and Volume of Output

Without some salutary restraint in the way of sabotage on the productive use of the available industrial plant and workmen, it is altogether unlikely that prices could be maintained at a reasonably profitable figure for any appreciable time. A businesslike control of the rate and volume of output is indispensable for keeping up a profitable market, and a profitable market is the first and unremitting condition of prosperity in any community whose industry is owned and managed by business men. And the way and means of this necessary control of the output of industry are always and necessarily something in the nature of sabotage—something in the way of retardation, restriction, withdrawal, unemployment of plant and workmen—whereby production is kept short of productive capacity. The mechanical industry of the new order is inordinately productive. So the rate and volume of output have to be regulated with a view to what the traffic will bear—that is to say, what will yield the largest net return in terms of price to the business men in charge of the country's industrial system. Otherwise there will be "overproduction," business depression, and consequent hard times all round. Overproduction means production in excess of what the market will carry off at a sufficiently profitable price. So it appears that the continued prosperity of the

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A Reconstruction of the Ruling Class

FROM THE "HAMILTON LABOR NEWS"

State Capitalism Is the Aim of the Large Interests This Will Aid Continued Rule of King Capital

The reconstruction period, as it is called, will be a very important one for all members of society, but especially for the capitalist class. On the issue of this period depends the existence of their class. In those countries where the capitalists are the ruling class, they will use every means in their power to make their existence secure. All social institutions will be tampered with, more or less. They will be put in new moulds, as it were, that look well. The social and institutional adjustments that will be made by the capitalist class government are of the highest importance, because if they are pleasing to the people, they will form a bulwark of defence for the capitalist system for some time to come.

Let no working man or woman be mistaken on this point, that the reconstruction period is the golden moment for the capitalist class to re-affirm and strengthen its rule over society, and it will not be found napping in making use of this moment.

It is therefore both interesting and instructive to make a survey of the policy the capitalist government in Canada will pursue to accomplish the end the capitalist class desire. The recent purchase of the railway systems by the Canadian government indicates the character of the reconstruction, the general line of development that will be

followed. Nationalization of industry will be a slogan during this period. The government, however, will not purchase all industries, though it may purchase some. But what is more to the point, the government will exercise more control over all industries, whether they actually belong to the government or not, both in their internal and external affairs. In other words, capitalistic forces and influences are endeavoring to move us into a period of social existence which might most aptly be described by the term State Capitalism.

There is a combination of circumstances forcing Canadian capitalism in the direction of state capitalism. The war is just over, and times promise to be pretty hard. Unemployment threatens to be pretty hard. Unemployment threatens to stalk the land again with hungry men. The working class is restless. The working men would not endure many nights in the bread line. They are already in an ugly mood owing to the autocratic orders-in-council passed by the cabinet in the last days of the war. A few days without bread, a few nights spent without shelter, would react on the patience of the working class like a lighted match reacts on a powder magazine. Moreover, the action of the working class first in Russia, and then in Germany, has given the Canadian working class a feeling of its power, has made it feel somewhat like a boy after he has killed his first bird with a sling shot.

Owing to this mood of the working class, it is

evident the capitalist class has reached the pass where it has to tread with caution. The ground under its feet is very slippery. Something must be done to control this working class, to appease it, to tame it, to cool its revolutionary ardor. The capitalist politicians have responded to their comrades' call to save Canadian capitalism by fleeing into the arms of State Capitalism.

It was not by chance, nor yet by choice, but by necessity that the Canadian government adopted the policy of the nationalization of industry, as it is popularly called. This policy has long been a political fad among the Radicals. The Union government, the high priest of Canadian capitalism, had to get the support of these Radicals to ensure its existence in power. The radicals are made up of four groups—the intellectuals, the petty bourgeois, the Conservative unions and the organized farmers. Each of these groups demand nationalization of industry for reasons peculiar to their economic status. The Conservative trade unions demand it because they think it will give them some reforms and increase their political influence. The farmers look upon the policy as a sort of political patent medicine, which will surely cure all social ills if the directions are only followed scrupulously. And now as the Turgots and Nickers of capitalism have adopted State Capitalism as a policy, the bourgeoisie itself no longer fear this fad of the Radicals, but consider it some-

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