

THE FRENCH RAILWAY STRIKE

A strike of great importance has just ended in France. The conditions of the strike, the methods employed by the strikers, the action of the government, the function of the military law, the position taken by the so-called Socialist Premier and Cabinet Ministers, all these throw a vivid light upon the class war and the friends and foes of the working class.

The employees of the Northern Railway of France, the line that runs between Paris and Calais on the road to England, have been agitating for more than a year for living working conditions. The working hours were from ten to fifteen a day, and as is the case with long hours, the pay is miserably low. The men wanted these conditions remedied. They demanded:

First, a general increase in wages to meet the higher cost of living, with a minimum daily pay of \$1 instead of 60 cents.

Second, a retroactive application of the employees' pension law.

Third, a more equitable division of work.

Fourth, the granting of one day off in seven.

Fifth, distinct employment by the month instead of by the day.

The demands originated with the under-trainmen, the baggage-handlers and ticket takers, but they were supported by the complete personnel of the road.

At first the company refused to meet the representatives of the men's unions or to recognize the union in any way. Later the company's officials descended from this high attitude and offered to meet representatives of each grade of the men, provided the representatives were actually employed on the line. The men knew by the experience of former years that such representatives would be made victims by the wholesale, thus weakening the organization. The workmen resolved to stand or fall together.

There are seven railroad companies in France. They employ 22,092 engineers and firemen and 290,713 general employees. The length of the lines are 38,577 kilometers. A kilometer is six-tenths of a mile.

On the night of October 10th the 45,000 employees of the Northern railway walked out. On October 11th the 44,000 employees of the Eastern railway walked out. At 1 a. m. on Oct. 12th, the National Federation of Railway Unions declared a general strike. During the height of the strike over half the railway workers of France had quit.

As soon as the Northern employees had struck the government got busy. Aristide Briand, the Premier, is an ex-Socialist. He calls himself one yet. Two of his Ministers, Viviani and Millerand, are also ex-Socialists. While a Socialist Briand was always advocating the general strike and the shooting of soldiers.

This man called his cabinet together and immediately took steps to stop the strike. Troops were called out to guard the Northern line and a decree was issued calling the striking trainmen to the colors as reservists. Under the military law of France the railway workers are enrolled as troops in case of need and can be called out to operate the trains under military law. This means that in their case the civil law is suspended and the military law is in force and if they refuse to obey they can be condemned by court martial for desertion. While Briand was passing this decree he was declaring at the same time that the strike was not political or revolutionary, but was rather professional. This shows that Briand has developed the hypocrisy of the capitalist class. If the strike was not political, why order out the reserve troops? The officials of the company, on the other hand, as they watched the stock of the road drop in the Bourse, declared emphatically that the strike was political and that the demand for higher wages was but a pretext.

When the employees of the Eastern Road walked out, Briand called the strike a criminal insurrection. Troops from the provinces were ordered into Paris. The pressure of the strike was felt among the ruling class and Briand declared that the strikers had grievances which should be righted. It is only when the working class use their power that they can get heard.

While Briand was using the powers of the state and military law to force the workers back to their slavery, the workers were not idle. The fight had developed in earnest and war was on. In war the side with the longest purse wins. In war you do as much damage as possible to the property of the other side.

The workers began their sabotage, which means the destruction of the property of their bosses. A train was held up at Passy and the live stock that was being carried to the city was liberated. The workers carried off essential parts of the engine. Lines were blocked by train wrecks.

After the general strike had been declared and the strike threatened to spread to the Paris, Lyons and Mediterranean railway with its 85,000 employees, Briand took more energetic measures. Warrants for the arrest of hundreds of the strike leaders were issued. Six were arrested in the office of Humanite. These were M. Le Moine, secretary of the state committee; M. Leguennic, leader of the union of the Western railway, whose 46,000 employees were on strike; M. Toffin, the secretary of the Drivers and Firemen's union, and Borderie and Benoit. When the arrests were made Toffin occupied the chair and editorial table at which Briand sat when he was on the staff of the paper and advocated the general strike. The charge against the strike leaders was that of rendering railway traffic dangerous to life. If convicted that they may be sentenced to death or penal servitude for life.

On October 14th the electrical workers of Paris struck and plunged the city into darkness. The masons and allied trades voted a general strike. On October 15th, thousands of Socialists gathered in a riding school near the Place de la Bastille, and were addressed by Jaures and others in revolutionary language. 20,000 masons who were parading on Butte Montmartre were dispersed by 10,000 troops.

Gustave Herve, who is doing four years time in the penitentiary for upholding the assassination of policemen, was placed in solitary confinement. Herve is an antimilitarist and his propaganda amongst soldiers has done much to weaken the hold of the bourgeoisie over the army. Therefore in a time of industrial disturbance when the troops are called out to break the revolt of the workers, such men as Herve must not only be jailed, but also dungeoned.

On October 19th the strike was called off. No stipulations were made. The men returned to work. The strike leaders declared that such a course was better than humiliating negotiations with the government.

Briand has shown himself in his true light. He is a slave driving politician. The feeling of the workers is bitter against him and he has about outlived his usefulness to the exploiters.

The revolutionary tide is rising in France. The spirit of syndicalism has struck the railroad workers. The postmen struck and frightened the capitalist class. The postmen went back to work. The railway workers strike and frighten the capitalists. They go back to work. But one of these times the strike will be successful. The troops will not remain loyal to the bourgeois form of government. A new era will be inaugurated. The social revolution will have triumphed.

The Toronto Globe declares that the fur trade is good and argues that fur is a luxury and when there is a good trade in luxuries there must be prosperity throughout Canada. This is erroneous reasoning. The purchase of luxuries generally does not mean that the people are prosperous. It means generally that there is an unhealthy state of affairs. There is too much wealth on one hand and too much poverty on the other. The parasites have the wherewithal to purchase luxuries. The poor are forced into slums and riot for bread. But what else except erroneous reasoning can we expect from the Globe? Has it not sent its editor down to Mexico, and has it not been publishing glowing reports of the prosperity of that country? Just as the Globe sees prosperity in Mexico although the workers are kept in penance and shot when they strike, so it sees prosperity in Canada because the labor thieves purchase furs.

Making the job last. You have heard of men who are paid by the day to do a certain job, who make the job hang out just as long as they can. They dawdle over it. The ignorant employer, who sees how slow the work is going, jumps to the conclusion that the worker is a lazy, shiftless creature, or else that he is a dishonest wretch who is trying to steal time. Both of these conclusions are wrong. The worker who makes the job last is just looking out for his own interests. He is paid by the day and his economic interest makes him want to get that pay for as long as he can. Let Socialism come with its industrial democracy and the worker who makes the job last will work with a will because he knows that he will get the full value of his labor. Under Socialism there will be no incentive to make the job last.

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SEIDEL AND ROOSEVELT

When Theodore Roosevelt visited Milwaukee, Seidel, the Socialist Mayor, would not welcome him, would not sit at banquet with him, would have nothing whatsoever to do with the creature. The plutocrats put this down to spite. But the truth was that Roosevelt had deeply slandered the Socialists. In the Outlook he had declared the following about Socialism:

"Indeed, these thoroughgoing Socialists occupy, in relation to all morality, and especially to domestic morality, a position so revolting—and I choose my words carefully—that it is difficult to discuss it in a reputable paper. In America the leaders even of this type have usually been cautious about stating frankly that they proposed to substitute free love for married and family life as we have it, although many of them do in a roundabout way uphold this position."

In other words, on the social and domestic side doctrinaire Socialism would replace the family and home life by a glorified state free lunch counter and state-founding asylum, deliberately enthroning self-indulgence as the ideal, with, on its darker side, the absolute abandonment of all morality as between man and woman."

After the above statement what else could a Socialist do but have nothing whatsoever to do with such a foul-minded beast as Roosevelt?

After Roosevelt had visited Milwaukee Seidel was interviewed and declared, "I don't mind saying that Mr. Roosevelt was very uncomfortable during his stay in Milwaukee. Not that he was unsafe or that anybody insulted him. Nobody attempted to molest him."

"It was because he wrote that stuff that I would not serve on the committee to receive him. But I don't want to talk about Roosevelt. I won't make him an issue."

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War has been declared by the Toronto Medical Health Department against the house fly. The house fly is very unhealthy to have round. But is it not peculiar that the war has been declared just when the cold weather will exterminate the fly for the next seven months? But what else can be expected from a capitalist Board of Health.

C. D. SHELDON

The name of C. D. Sheldon is now well known in Montreal. Sheldon has been the most talked of man in that city during the past month. He has created much commotion and his going caused more stir than his coming. Let us examine the activities of this man in relation to the wage workers, and let us examine the attitude of the publicity agents with regard thereto.

Sheldon came to Montreal quietly some time last year. He took an office and began to invite persons to entrust money to him. He claimed to know much about the stock market and claimed that by his system he could beat the stock operators and make money for his clients. He promised twenty and thirty per cent per month returns on the money entrusted to him.

Money began to flow in upon him. He paid those who wanted their money back the principal and the big returns. He endeavored, however, to get the clients to leave the principal and interest with him for reinvestment.

His fame became noised widely and more money came in each month. Finally his activities became so notorious that many persons became inquisitive. The public interest became so keen as to his methods of making such big returns that more money was being drawn out by clients than was being put in. The newspapers got after him and his methods, and recently, in a night, he departed for regions unknown, leaving numerous creditors behind him. It is now known that his method of doing business was simply the paying out to old clients the money that he got from the new ones. The big profits were being paid out of the money of the new dupes who were constantly bringing their funds to him.

He left many creditors. What he got away with is not known. Yet during the last three months of his operations he took in one hundred thousand dollars a month more than he paid out.

There is much outcry against Sheldon. The newspapers are making a great splurge about him. He is gone. The evil that he has done is done. Yet the newspapers keep hammering on about him. He is good material to work on. He is dead so far as his present influence for evil is concerned. Therefore he is a good thing to discuss for the newspapers. He can be hammered and pounded and railed at, and attention will be attracted from more vital questions. You wage slaves of Montreal, what interest have you in Sheldon? Are you so blind as not to see that he is being played up that your eyes may be kept from seeing the labor skinner who are living off the labor of your hands?

Sheldon, by the newspapers, is

looked upon and treated as the only stealer of other men's goods. Yet you wage slaves are plundered every day of the year. Sheldon may have got away with millions. Those who are left are plundering you of tens of millions.

Sheldon played a raw game. He must have been found out. The robbers you have left are playing a cuter game. Their plunderings have gone on for many years.

All wealth comes from labor, mental or physical. At present the greater part of mental labor in Montreal is not productive. The ones who labor with their brains are mostly laboring not to produce wealth, but to get the wealth produced away from the proletarian producers.

This labor-produced wealth should go to the producers. It is fleeced from them through rent, interest and profit.

Wage workers of Montreal, what is Sheldon to you? You have little wealth to give him. His days are run. He has skipped. Why waste your precious mental energy in following the newspaper accounts of what he has done? Why not use your brains to free yourselves?

Sheldon got away with a million at the most. The parasite owners of the city bonds of Montreal got away with two millions in interest each and every year. Why waste time in trying to catch a passing thief who got away with a million, when you can be working to stop the legalized robbery of two million yearly?

The shareholders and bondholders of the Canadian Pacific Railway get nearly two million dollars from the unpaid labor of the wage slaves in Montreal. Why not try and stop that yearly robbery and turn those millions into the hands of labor?

The landlords, the department stores, the street railway company, the lighting companies, the cotton mills, the rubber works, the vast number of private industrial slave pens of Montreal yield millions to the parasite owners thereof. This robbery of the workers takes place year in and year out.

Why use your brains to worry over Sheldon? Would it not be far more sensible to use your brains to stop the robbery practised upon you?

Why do the newspapers of Montreal give so many columns to Sheldon? Do you think it is simply to get Sheldon back to justice?

Not at all. It is to keep you wage slaves from thinking about yourselves. You produce the wealth and the private owners get it. You produce and the parasites enjoy. The moment you get to thinking on this, that moment you will take steps to so arrange conditions that you will enjoy what you produce.

Sheldon comes as a godsend to your masters. They can shout "Thief, thief" after him and get you to take up the cry and leave them free to steal you blind.

Wake, wage workers of Montreal. Stop playing the game your masters want you to play. Play the game that will put your wives into good homes, give your children good food and warm clothing, give you control of your own labor and raise you to prosperity and freedom.

H. C. McLeod resigned the General Managership of the Bank of Nova Scotia last January because he could not stand for the way the banks were running the finances of the country. He could not stand for secretive management. "All the members of the Canadian Bankers Association are opposed to changes that I have urged with the object of doing away with secretive management, and they suggest no other remedy for the demonstrated weakness of our system," says Mr. McLeod. There are to be no changes in the banking system when the charters are to be renewed. That is the intimation that has been given out. Can't you see the skin game your representatives are playing on you? They tie you up to the labor skinner in double bow knots and you fools go and reelect the old gang back into power year after year. You must like to be stolen blind by legalized robbers.

Judge Grantham of England who was recently in Canada declared on his return that the railway workers and miners of Canada had sent this message by hint to the British workers, "Give up your false pride in strength and members. You are fighting for the shadows and losing substance. You are killing the bird that lays the golden egg. The capitalist is your greatest friend." This judge is a liar. Yet he goes on the bench and pretends to give justice. That is the kind of common every day liars who are administering the capitalist laws of Great Britain. It was just such a group of judges that prevented the workers from being represented in Parliament by the Osborne decision.

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A PARSON WITH BLINDERS ON

J. A. Macdonald, one of the editors of the Toronto Globe, is giving an account of his trip through Mexico along with the other newspaper men who attended the celebration in Mexico. This editor can see nothing but smiling faces and happy people. To read his stuff one would think that Mexico was a paradise on earth.

A writer in the American Magazine has been laying bare the conditions which actually exist. This is what he says:

"From the hints I have given in this article you may easily conceive the appalling conditions which obtain in Mexico to-day; the murdered thousands, the outraged women, the stolen farmsteads, the starving, homeless peasantry, the men and women and little children imprisoned in loathsome jails; all the indescribable hopelessness and misery and suffering of a nation. To offset this the subsidized writers prate of the lawlessness which has been changed to law, of policemen made from bandits; of railways and street car systems and asphalted streets and an eight-million-dollar opera house. Of the two sides of the medal—the one held up to the glare of the calcium, the other kept carefully concealed in the shadow—you can take your choice."

For the celebration that has just taken place Mexico was "cleaned up." All the out-of-works were flung into jail. The miserable workers were thrust into the background. And the newspaper reporters were shown the cleaned up streets and the sights which had been staged for them.

Macdonald goes down to Mexico with his blinders on. He sees but what Butcher Diaz would like him to see. And he reports what he sees for a credulous Canadian public.

Why does he do this? Have not the Canadian labor skinner great interests in Mexico? It would never do to let the plug workers of Canada know the rotten conditions of Mexico out of which our Canadian financiers draw their dividends.

So the Reverend J. A. Macdonald keeps his blinders on and tries to make the Canadian people see with his blinded eyes through the columns of the Toronto Globe.

Few realize how far humanity is socialized at present. Many call themselves individualists when as a matter of fact they would become indignant were the social benefits they now enjoy removed. The roads are public property. The sidewalks have been socialized. The post office is an institution established for the benefit of all the people. Municipal water-works and drainage system, fire brigades, and many other services are now socially produced and socially operated. These things are good. The great majority of men admit they are good. Where the social services fail is where they are allowed to remain individual. In many places municipal bakeries are being started. It is being considered part of the social duty to provide pure and wholesome bread at a cheap price, to eliminate competition and the waste and inefficiency that results from private bakeries. Where civilization fails is not in its socialized functions, but in its individualized short comings.

Wealth is produced by labor power being applied to raw material for the production of the things men want. Labor power is applied in that manner in which the powerful capitalist class desires and in a way to make unearned profit out of the machinery owned by the most powerful section of the capitalist class. In Germany one of the most powerful sections of the capitalist class base their power on ship yards and gun factories. Therefore the workers are set to work to produce ships of war and guns. These capitalists cannot see how labor could be employed were the ship yards and gun factories to go out of business. They think that vested interests must be protected. They could be put out of business and the country would become more prosperous. For the money now spent on naval armaments could be spent on old age pensions, feeding of school children, care of the sick and feeble, cleaning up the slums, and many other things that would benefit humanity.


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