

How Shall We Attain Industrial Peace?

Extracts from a recent address before the New York State Bankers' Association by Walter Gordon Meritt, counsel of the American Anti-Boycott Association

Before the war the nation thrust this question aside whenever possible, but when the war is over the day of reckoning will be at hand, and the industrial question will lie athwart our path as a barrier which must be surmounted. What can I say to convince you of the oncoming of this irrepres- sible issue and the momentous changes in store for us, if, living in these thrilling times and a part of them, you do not yourselves feel that intangible but all-pervading spirit of expectancy that is ev- erywhere present? Throughout the Western world there will be a recasting of our industrial institu- tions. There are moments in the history of man- kind when certain ideas which have been growing, but inarticulate, for a century, suddenly possess the great masses of mankind, and that moment is now.

A glance at conditions existing in Great Britain, and a reading of her spirit in the words of pub- licists accustomed to feel the pulse of the nation, will prove, with overwhelming force, the modera- tion of this statement. "After the war," says Dean Inge, it is organized labor which "will decide whe- ther we are to sink or swim." Arthur Gleason and Graham Wallace both see a more democratic control of industry; while Sir John Hodge, the Min- ister of Labor, says that "labor must be called into the council of directors of every great firm. One of the great lessons which the war has taught Eng- lish industry is that labor must have a voice in the direction of corporations." Labor will never be willing to return to pre-war conditions, says Sir Edward Carson.

GREAT BRITAIN'S NEW INDUSTRIAL REGIME.

Everything in Great Britain points to a new in- dustrial regime, where national, district and shop committees of labor and capital will meet in joint councils to dispose of matters surrounding condi- tions of employment. Upon this plan the leading economists, the committee appointed by the Brit- ish Association for the Advancement of Science, the tentative report of the Government Reconstruc- tion Committee and the Government Committee to Investigate the Causes of Industrial Unrest are all agreed. Some feel that these joint councils should have some power to adopt rules binding on the re- calcitrant minority; others, like our Federal Indus- trial Relations Commission, would make it possible for employers' association and unions by economic pressure to practically force the entire industry to join their respective associations, and still others feel that the great power of such highly organized societies requires that the Government also be a party to every agreement. But, regardless of how we feel as to the comparative advantages of these different plans, it may be taken as practically set- tled in Great Britain that the important questions surrounding the employment of labor there will in the future be settled, as they are now being settled, by joint conferences of employers and representa- tives of labor.

ALLIANCE OF ALL WORKERS BY HAND OR BRAIN.

But the struggle for change will not stop there. During January there was launched in Great Brit- ain a new political organization representative of the laboring interests, which may prove epochal in British political history. The present labor party will probably be joined by the Trade Union Con- gress, representing four and one-half million trade unionists, and the industrial co-operative societies representing three and one-half million members, and it is believed that after allowance is made for duplication, this new alliance will represent at least two-fifths of the entire population of Great Britain. It will be publicly thrown open, not to manual wage earners alone, but to all workers by "hand or by brain," and, in view of the prospect for woman suf- frage, will make a special drive for women mem- bers. A country like Great Britain, which lingers in Gethsemane, will never revert to its pre-war condition of industrial strife, and our beloved coun- try, which now in some respects is the most con- servative of nations, will not be far behind.

Everywhere throughout our own land is the per- vading thought that the day of the working people is at hand and that democracy has come into its own; the radicalism of yesterday becomes the con- servatism of to-day. Practically every disinterest-

ed economist, investigator and student, and perhaps a majority of the thinking people, stand united for collective bargaining and a broader participation of the workers in that part of the government of industry which concerns their welfare. And that is not all. "One looming shadow of this war," says Mr. Hoover, a practical man of affairs, "is its drift toward socialism. We will surely drift to that rocky coast unless we can prove the economic soundness and willingness for public service of our commercial institutions."

Samuel Gompers, catching this spirit of the times more than most men and seeing in it an opportunity for the workers which he is determined to exploit by eloquent and fiery phrases, exhorted the dele- gates to the Buffalo Convention of the Federation of Labor to make the most of it.

Under the burning heat of necessity, civiliza- tion is now in a fluid state. The group which has the most intelligent self-interest will con- trol developments. The world cataclysm swept away conventions and barriers to aspiration. This is a time when the impossible is achieved. It is a time when there is no check on the au- dacity of aspiration. Upon the delegates to the Buffalo convention devolves the duty of proving themselves masters of their opportuni- ties and able to take advantage of the leader- ship within their grasp. It is idle to talk of re- turning to the status quo ante—the America and the world of before the war have gone, never to return.

This feeling of change, precipitated and crystal- lized by the war, is but the inevitable harvest of disturbed and disordered industrial conditions which antedated the war, and the collapse of Government in dealing with them. Most people, unfamiliar with the literature and psychology of the working classes, realize not the extent to which we have been living in an anti-social state of industrial war and a still more abnormal and dangerous state of anti-social propaganda which could not last indefinitely.

THE INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT.

The industrial conflict is no longer a private is- sue between employer and employee, but has be- come primarily an issue between organized labor and our existing institutions. While most of or- ganized labor is not avowedly revolutionary, it has cultivated and established a spirit of distrust to- ward even democratic government, which makes it unwilling to quietly accept the administration of law. The American Federation of Labor in conven- tion at Baltimore in November, 1916, and again in Buffalo in November, 1917, officially declared for open resistance and defiance toward labor injunc- tions, and the Federation and the railroad brother- hoods declared that any law regulating the right to strike on railroads would not be obeyed. They unite in refusing to accept arbitration or Govern- ment regulation as a substitute for the death-deal- ing power of a national railroad strike, and do so on the ground that in all society no fair arbitra- tors can be found. So you have the entire body of organized labor of the United States publicly chal- lenging the fairness of society and the sovereignty of the nation. If we could feel that labor, recog- nizing our democratic institutions, would alone seek progress through political channels, and that after it had exercised its rights at the polls, would inter- pose neither physical nor economic resistance to the authority of government, we would rejoice in- deed, but we must first dissipate the disrepute into which it has brought the authority of law and the supremacy of the State, and endeavor to bring its feelings into greater reconciliation with the pur- poses of democratic society.

THE WAY TO INDUSTRIAL PEACE.

Our existing institutions cannot long survive the resistance with which they were meeting before the war and when the end of the external conflict again releases internal strife, some safety valve must be devised to reduce the pressure of social disunion. A nation divided against itself by the labor question, as this country was and again will be after the war, must find some way of overcoming that division, the very existence of which demonstrates the in- adequacy and ineptitude of our present treatment. For three decades of severe industrial strife we have made no substantial progress toward indus- trial peace or arbitration or a lessening of class

bitterness despite improved conditions of the work- ers.

THE GOSPEL OF CO-OPERATION.

Co-operation is the social and commercial gos- pel of the day, rooted in the gospel of Christianity itself, but how little is it practiced between capital and labor! To a large extent it is an era of in- dustrial armament — labor unions are not organ- ized or operated primarily for co-operation, but to fight; their machinery is adjusted to a programme of militancy and leaders proclaim it a militant move- ment. The average employers' association, organ- ized to deal with the labor problem, suffers from the same defect, and its salaried representatives harangue on the evils of organized labor and aim to keep alive a consciousness of peril which will solidify employers for self-defence. Even shop com- mittees of unorganized workers are usually discour- aged. In many industries we find, instead of co- operation, everything focused on industrial war; there are strike breakers, detectives, lawyers and a full treasury on the one side and corresponding im- plements of war on the other. The leaders of these respective interests have been so taught to despise and hate each other that in many industries they refuse to meet face to face.

WHERE TO START FOR INDUSTRIAL PEACE.

But what shall we do to make a start? Where be- gins the highway to industrial peace? Business men want practical suggestions. The first prerequisite is to sweep away the rubbish of prejudice, which prevents joint conferences of employers and labor leaders, and build in its place the sound foundations of common counsel. Let us summon a joint con- gress of the chosen representatives of labor and of employers to meet at Washington under Govern- ment sanction and with a Government moderator. Even unorganized labor, where employed in large numbers by large corporations, could thus be given means of national expression. Such a Congress would endeavor to thresh out fundamental differences of opinion, would listen to the difficulties and embarrass- ments of the respective interests and as far as pos- sible agree upon a tentative platform to which the re- spective organizations would pledge their moral support. Its discussions would enlighten the pub- lic and the Government as to fundamental issues, and would focus the condemnation of public opin- ion upon those employers and those labor repre- sentatives who insisted upon demands opposed to public interests. This congress should meet an- nually or semi-annually and its very existence would help to wipe out in no small degree that feel- ing of prejudice and personal hostility which in so large a degree obstructs co-operation and would count as a greater advance to a lasting industrial peace than any other single step. Little progress can be made toward industrial peace when the Na- tional Association of Manufacturers and kindred organizations meet annually by themselves and denounce labor leaders as serpents, as one of the presidents did; little good can come from the ex- clusive meetings of the Federation of Labor, where employers are denounced as Bourbons. Such class conventions blindly stimulate distrust and antagon- ism toward people whose motives and purposes they scarcely understand, and condemn an entire class for the mistakes or excesses of a few. It is time to lay aside our prejudices and to take new meas- urements, based upon the new spirit of democracy;

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THE HARVEST RESULTS OF 1917.

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1916. This is the first time that the value of the field crops of Canada has exceeded a billion dollars, and whilst this result is in part due to the splendid efforts of Canadian farmers to maintain and increase the acreage under the principal food crops, the in- crease in total value is due chiefly to the higher prices per unit.

In Table IV, the total estimated value of the field crops of Canada is given, by provinces, for each of the five years, 1913 to 1917. In 1913, before prices were affected by the war the total value was \$552,- 772,000, whilst for 1917 it was more than double this figure. It will also be noticed that whereas for the first two years of the table, Ontario and Saskatchewan occupied first and second places respectively, in the relative value of all crops, for the last three years this order was reversed and Saskatchewan now leads in value owing to the importance of its wheat crop. For each of the last two years the total value of the crops of Saskatchewan was approximately 100 mil- lion dollars more than the total value of the crops of