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VOL. 1, NO. 17.

EDMONTON, ALTA., AUG. 15, 1919.

BUSINESS MANAGER, BOX 1682

An Appeal to the British Workers

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From "The Workers' Dreadnought," London, England

Are you a trade unionist?
If not, why not?

Do you find the conditions of life in field or factory so pleasant that you had no desire for any improvement? Did you find your employer so obliging, and ready to give you what you asked, that you did not find it necessary to take other measures to get what you wanted? If so, then you have been more fortunate than most workers, for that is not the usual experience.

If you are a trade unionist, do you thoroughly understand the reason of your membership in a trade union? You know that the employer does not employ you for love, you know that, if he can, he will press your wages down to the lowest level, you know that when you are organized you are better able to get your demands accepted than when your employer has to deal with each man separately. Even so your employers have resisted your demands, and you have been compelled to come out on strike.

You have learnt the need for working class discipline and working class loyalty: for you will agree that there is no more contemptible creature than a blackleg. But being a trade unionist means much more than this. Have you ever asked yourself why it is that in spite of your organization, in spite of your strikes, even successful strikes, your position as a worker has not improved? Even when you obtained higher wages you were not able to buy more food or clothing with them. Did you not find that prices were rising always higher than your wages? It was like chasing a will-o'-the-wisp in trying to keep up with them. In spite of reductions of hours there were still plenty of unemployed. And how often have you found that with the introduction of a new machine your work has completely gone and the trade union could do nothing to prevent it?

You see, then, merely to be a trade unionist is not enough. You are not merely up against the particular employer you work for, but against all employers as a class.

Your interests are not merely identical with the workers in your particular trade or industry, but with all workmen.

The Class War

In fact you are up against the whole capitalist system. What is Capitalism? Capitalism is the system under which the land, the railways, factories, and all means of obtaining a livelihood are owned by private individuals, who use them for their own benefit.

Who owns England? Do you? Can you point to any part of England and say: "This is mine"? If you can you are one of the lucky ones. There are not many working men in England who can say that. The England that you call "your country" is not your country, but the landlords'. In England women whose husbands are fighting "for their country" are being evicted from their houses. If you do not pay rent to the landlord you cannot live in "your country."

The tremendous industry of England is not run for the purpose of providing you and your family with food and clothing. It is run for the purpose of providing profit and interest for the capitalists, financiers, and for rich shirkers generally to lead idle and luxurious lives while you slave and toil to create it.

All wealth comes from labor. Does labor get it? If it did there would be no poor people in England. The worker is robbed of the product of labor. He is robbed by those who take the rent, profit and interest, i.e., the landlords and the capitalists. Between you and them there is an irreconcilable antagonism. As long as there are capitalists, workmen will be robbed, and continue to remain poor. Your aim as a trade unionist, desiring to improve your conditions in life, should be to abolish capitalism. You would be doing more good for yourself, if you conquered England for the English people.

The War and the Class War

The productivity of labor has increased to such an extent that the capitalists have to find new markets to dispose of the surplus wealth

and profits you have created. This is what this war is about. The German capitalists and the Allied capitalists are competing with each other as to who shall control the undeveloped parts of the world for the purpose of investing the profits they wrung out of the labor of their respective workers. This is why you have been brought to Russia. Your capitalists see in our country a rich field for investment. And so you have been brought here to overthrow our workers' government, and bring back the rule of the landlords, capitalists, and the Czar. It is indeed a grim jest that the workers of Europe are slaughtering each other by the thousands for the purpose of deciding where the wealth they have been plundered of shall go. Even during the war the class war has gone on. At the outbreak of the war the capitalists said to you: "We must not quarrel now. We are of the same race, we must all unite and show a solid front to the enemy." The workers believed them, and gave up everything in defense of their country. But the capitalists continued in their old business of bleeding the workers. With them it was "business as usual," only more so. For the people the war has been the cause of ruin, sorrow, grief and disaster. For the capitalists it has been an El-Dorado. They have made such profits as they have never in their lives dreamed of. Immense fortunes have been made out of the blood and tears of the working people.

It has been the same in every country. In every country the capitalists have used the workers as cannon-fodder on the battlefields and as material for exploitation at home. The capitalist class worship no other god but profit, and own allegiance to any country where profit can be obtained.

Does not this show that the peoples are not divided according to nationality, but according to class?

The workers of each country are not enemies to each other. Their real enemies are at home, the capitalists, who are robbing and exploiting the poor people, and who have set the workers against each other, in order that they may be able to fleece them the more.

The workers can only put an end to this exploitation, and mutual slaughter by overthrowing the capitalists and taking control into their own hands.

This is the logical outcome of being a trade unionist

Our Revolution.

We, the workers of Russia, in our fights with the capitalists have always taken this view. In October last we swept the capitalists out of power, and declared that Russia belongs to the whole of the Russian people.

We are not going to grow food for the rich to feed, or weave cloth for the rich to wear. The people will enjoy the product of their labor.

Can you wonder that the capitalists of all countries should hate us? We have shattered their dreams of the vast fortunes to be made out of the great stores of natural wealth contained in our country.

Besides, if they allow us to remain in existence, will not the workers in the other countries follow suit, and do as we have done?

They have decided therefore to crush us before we have time to consolidate our position. And you, English trade unionists will be used for this purpose.

The Russian capitalists do not stand an earthly chance against us have commenced? Are you going to do the dirty work of your enemies, the same as those of the Russian capitalists, and have come to their assistance.

Why do you not recognize your class interest in the same way? You as trade unionists are fighting your capitalists, we have settled our account with ours.

What are you going to do? Are you going to undo the work we have commenced? Are you going to do the dirty work of your enemies, the capitalist class? Or will you remain loyal to your own class—the working class—and support our effort to secure the world for labor?

Remember

By fighting us you are not fighting for your country, but for the capitalists whom your fellow trade unionists at home are fighting. By fighting us you are fighting your fellow workers. Every blow you strike against us is a blow you strike against yourselves. If you crush us you will only succeed in strengthening the power of your capitalists to rob and exploit you.

Fellow workers, on whose side are you—the workers' or the masters'?