

# The Arrested Union Leaders

Readers of "Huck Finn" will no doubt recollect the release of the "Runaway slave" by the educated and dromantic Tom Sawyers in conjunction with the illiterate but practical Huck Finn. Jim, the slave, was in an old barn, with a board nailed across a windowless frame; he was chained to the leg of a wooden bed. To pry off the board, crawl through the open window frame, lift the bed and remove the chain was the work of a moment, and Jim was free. Thus advised Huck. Tom insisted upon digging a tunnel under the barn, sawing off the bed leg, eating the sawdust, as an alternative to chopping off Jim's leg. By a somewhat similar strategy the Canadian Government has succeeded in capturing a group of conspirators, who were feverishly sapping the foundation of society. Cabinet ministers hinted at some mysterious program, military generals prophesized unctuously of tremendous events portending. Newspaper leaders breathlessly consumed the veiled announcements in editorials, until the business element of Western Canada, were all "strikers" in a different sense of meaning to that word when applied to working class affairs, Tuesday, June 17, we experienced the worst—the blow fell. At three or four o'clock in the morning, nine of the Winnipeg strike leaders were taken from their beds and rushed to jail, somewhere in Canada. This masterly strategem, was accomplished simultaneously with a raid on the Labor Temple. A project which entirely overreached the agents of destruction. A cordon of several hundred police surrounded the Labor Temple and the majesty of the law was duly vindicated by breaking down locked doors. Gideon Robertson says it was a "very nice job." Of course it was.

We wonder did the "Founted Police" as the World has it, bite through the doors, in Tom Sawyers or Don Manco, Pietro de la Sausage, Milo style, and if so did they swallow the sawdust. Well might the tired businessman now exclaim "How long Cattilene, will you abuse our patience! Do you not perceive your designs are discovered."

Yes it was a "very nice job."

Having arrested nine men, something must be done. We hear of several charges of conspiring to prevent the police from performing their duty, conspiring to overthrow constituted authority, taking Bolsheviki money and some few score others. One charge which refers to making the constitutional government of Canada ridiculous must be a mistake. We can't see what could be more likely to bring ridicule upon a government, than the appeal published in the press as having been made by Minister of Labor Robertson to Samuel Gompers. This Gompers who was the laughing stock of Europe, and who is utterly discredited in Canada and the United States. Who was charged by a fellow delegate to the Seattle Convention, with making the night hideous with drunken noise so that delegates living in the same hotel could not get proper sleep, and when Delegate McDonald went to remonstrate, Gompers in his nightshirt, flourished a bottle of booze, and bellowed for him to come in. And to this individual, living in a foreign country, and an alien emigrant at that; a minister of this government—appeals for help. If in such actions constitutional government consists, it would be superfluous to try making it ridiculous.

The "Vancouver World," which fortunately had not been "suspended" carried the news of this great exploit. It had furthermore, two news items side by side which have a slight bearing on Robertson's "very nice job," under a Sidney, N. S. W. date line, we are told that "about" sixty persons mostly Russians who have been actively engaged as Bolshevik-propagandists for some time, are to be deported without delay." The account goes on to say—"it is stated somewhat mysteriously that persons deported in the circumstances detailed are being sent to territory set apart by the British Government—for the internment of Bolsheviks and other rebels." That's a very nice job too. We

admire the term "deportation." During the chartist agitations and the early days of trades' unionism, it was called transportation. We suggest Siberia as a likely place. It would save much expense; there being large political prisons already built; in addition to which it seems to be the largest and least populated section of the world's area, and that is a very important factor, as we shall see by reading the next column. A mining town of New South Wales, Cobar by name, with a population of 5000, has been ruined by the slump in copper. According to the report—"the people of Cobar are stunned, and do not know what to do. They have made frantic appeals to the government for assistance, but what can the state government do, that it is not already doing?" It proposes to find one-third of them jobs elsewhere. What could a government do in a country where wheat lies rotting in the open air, and feeding rats. Where cattle roam the wide spaces, in such numbers as to almost become pests. What could a poor government do? It could do what any master class government could do; transport six or seven prominent members of the working class, while thousands upon thousands of the working class starve because there is too much copper, too much wheat, too much beef, too much of everything that man requires.

Siberia will do for the present, though at the rate Bolshevism is growing, it is quite likely that, orderly and constitutional government might be driven to select a quiet spot for itself, say St. Helena, and banish the Bolsheviks to the other portions of the earth. That would be a "very nice job" too.

Arresting the leaders, while a strike is being conducted on a charge not connected with the strike, is a daring act indeed. No one can accuse our government of cowardice. Bold as the city green-horn, crawling up to a patch of wild oats at four o'clock in the morning, they carried out their instructions to the letter. Some people might suggest that in arresting strike leaders during a strike, they have done a very foolish thing, we would hardly go so far, but even if it is foolish, our government can always retreat gracefully, from a foolish position, as witness the law forbidding strikes passed last January.

Of course consideration is always to be given to the source we derive information from. The Great Lying Press, an institution in ordinary time vile enough, but in times of working class protest, unspeakably vile. We take as an example two reports: The Vancouver "World," June 17, front page says—"G. D. Robertson said he had no information to give out. The arrests had taken place, he declared, as a result of a decision of the department of justice, and the department of labor was not concerned with them." The Vancouver "Province," June 18, front page says—"Sir Robert Borden told Mr. MacKenzie that the prisoners had been arrested on a charge of seditious conspiracy. Government Council at Winnipeg had been instructed that it should take no proceedings for arrest of the men, save under the authority of the minister of labor. That authority had evidently been given." The "World" reports Robertson as stating that the department of labor had nothing to do with the arrests. The "Province" reports Borden as saying the arrests could only be made by authority of the department of labor, which is the liar! Are these bold and honorable "craters" already seeking to avoid responsibility? We can not tell. One thing only we are sure of—the press lies, systematically, purposely, and calculatingly,—that is a fact which has all the validity and force of a mathematical demonstration—that two and two are four. We must always remember this one great fundamental factor of modern life, the function of the press is to lie. The sole object of its existence as a powerful public institution is to create views, not to give news. To create views on Tanlac, Chew-

ing Gum, Stieckfast, Gods, Gastine, Gompers, Tin-Lizzies, Ministers of Labor, of Religion, of Vice and of Justice, to create views on the value of corn cures, adapted to venereal troubles, of the best methods to remove a boil, or an unborn child. So that in judging honorable men like Robertson and Borden we must always remember the functions and practice of newspaperdom.

However, we can be assured that the strike-leaders of Winnipeg are arrested, every newspaper we have seen proclaims this fact as true, though that in itself is no guarantee of truth, they all proclaim this strike to be a revolution, and they all lie, with deliberate intent. These members of the working class have been taken from their bed in the early morning because they were prominent in a strike. The early morning raid was for no other purpose than to emphasize the dangerous character of the prisoners. They are, according to some reports, to be transported by order of the immigration office if found guilty of the charges; which consist of some generalizations and allegations which border on idiocy. A statement attributed to Robertson appears in the "Province" of June 18. It is quite in keeping with his former utterances, is in blackface, so we assume that it must be of great significance.—"From additional evidence obtained consisting of papers, pamphlets and documents gathered in by the police on Tuesday morning, only a few have been scrutinized, the citizens of Winnipeg and Canada will have little difficulty in reaching a conclusion as to the depth and seriousness of the conspiracy which was going on, not in Winnipeg only but generally throughout Western Canada.

"The representatives of the justice department will in due time unfold the facts. It might be interesting, however for the public to know that the records indicate that a special committee had been selected on June 10, to investigate and report upon the possibilities of cutting off the electric power from the city, and that correspondence addressed to R. B. Russell, secretary of the One Big Union Provincial Executive Committee of Manitoba, acknowledges receipt of Bolsheviki money."

Let us examine the fatuous statement. Of course Robertson can blame it on the Province and the Province can blame it on someone else. In the first place, the "citizens" are advised that they will be able to judge from documents "few of which have yet been scrutinized." The facts which are known are so childish as hardly deserving attention from serious-minded men, were it not that the Canadian Government is apparently hopeful of putting over this assault on "working class freedom" by force. A special committee was appointed to report on the possibility of cutting off the supply of electricity. A remarkably revolutionary project. But note the conclusion: Correspondence addressed to R. B. Russell, acknowledges receipt of Bolsheviki money." Who sent that correspondence to Russell? And why should Russell be arrested because some fool or rogue sent him a letter claiming to have received Bolsheviki money. And what have the eight other men got to do with this fellow who tells Russell in a letter that he had received Bolsheviki money?

If the government have no better case than Robertson announces, then there will be one hell of a row when the case reaches the House of Commons in England. Being a fool is the one unforgivable crime in the code of imperial capitalism. We are living in a different world today than that of five years ago, and such acts as this arrest can but result in the class lines being tighter drawn, the class issue clearly revealed, and the class struggle more definitely recognized.

Apropos of nothing whatever, we rise to remark that upon the last occasion of governmental kidnapping of Labor Leaders we wot off; Governor Peabody of Colorado, who issued the order, died a

(Continued on Page Six)