

WHAT OTHERS ARE THINKING

Bright Clippings from Wide-a-wake Contemporaries

THE CRUELTY OF CONSCRIPTION.

A Letter to Women.

Who made the Law that men should die in meadows?

Who spoke the Word that blood should splash in lanes?

Who gave it forth that gardens should be boneyards?

Who spread the hills with flesh and blood and brains?

Who made the Law?

Who made the Law that death should stalk the valleys?

Who spoke the Word to kill among the sheaves?

Who gave it forth that Death should lurk in hedgerows?

Who flung the dead amid the fallen leaves?

Who made the Law?

The above lines were found on the body of the author, a young soldier, who died on the field of battle. He was killed in the Somme fighting last October.

Well may we ask "Who made the Law?"—the law that drives such boys as these to death, with sorrow and wonder in their hearts.

Women of Canada—in Ottawa to-day they are planning to thrust upon us this cursed law. Perhaps the hellish deed will be accomplished before your eyes fall upon this page!

What shall we do? Are we calmly to submit when our boys are driven out to the slaughter?

In the "Forward," of June 12th, there was an account of the sufferings of my dear young brother, under the Conscription Law in England. He is a life-long pacifist, a conscientious objector. Dragged from his business (he is a yarn merchant) and his widowed mother, whose other boy is with the troops, he has already spent more than thirteen months in the brutal hands of the military authorities. The story would break a heart of stone, and he is but one of the many thousands.

Do you realize what Conscription means? Oh, women, women with mother-hearts, this war was arranged and is dominated by the blood-stained capitalists of the world, not by any means those of our nation only.

Their hands, red with the murder of the flower of earth's youth, are held up by the apostate "ministers" of the sweetest Teacher of Love and Brotherhood this world has ever known, Christ the Toiler, Christ the Carpenter, Who gave back the sick and the dead, healed and restored to their loved ones.

The world is submerged in a sea of madness. And so, I send forth from my breaking heart a call to Canada's women. Do you realize that they will make of your own sons, not only soldiers, but slaves. Militarism is already enslaving men all over our Empire. The poor people of India are dragged to the colors, or to indentured labor. In England, after serving terms of imprisonment, those who from Christian of Socialist motives refuse to submit are offered "alternative service"—a dignified name for a most degrading condition. Here, men are treated worse than convicts—men of the higher refinement—placed under the control of unthinkable brutes, mocked, forced to labor under conditions that would shame negro slavery. Of course, many refuse this "alternative" and are returned to prison; though the law of England expressly states that the "genuine" conscientious objector is entitled to absolute exemption. But militarism knows no law. The best and noblest men in England and Germany to-day are behind prison bars.

Are we going to endure this here? Three times the women of Germany, massed in the thousands, have stoned

the palace of the Hohenzollerns, demanding that the slaughter of the men shall cease. Bayoneted, sabred, shot—they are for all time the example to all true motherhood. Women of Canada, shall we arise and save our men?

From my little farm home where I weep and pray and suffer, I call to the women with mother-hearts. If you will help, write to me, enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope; and let us form our plans to resist this accursed slavery.

(MRS.) GERTRUDE RICHARDSON,
Swan River,
Manitoba.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF.

(By J. McArthur Conner.)

I have just read R. A. Riggs', M.P.P., speech in the Manitoba Legislature, on January 22, 1917, on National Service, and one of the passages in that speech deserves attention by all Canadians. Here it is:

"A friend of mine in this city has been fired by his employer because his views on the war are not satisfactory to his employer. He is the son of an old Scotch Crofter. He has two brothers fighting in France to-day. His old father, over seventy years of age, has for the past twenty-one years held the lease of a small farm in Scotland. The lease has now expired. When he made application for renewal the landowner informed him that he could not agree to a renewal as he wished to utilize that farm for the purpose of making additions to his game preserve. And the two sons of that old Scotch Crofter are fighting for freedom, fighting for their country, while their father is being driven off a little piece of land."

This story interested me. Is it not a tragedy that because the land which is in the hands of a privileged section, instead of being publicly owned, deprives an old man of his means of life, while his two sons are fighting in France? Yet this is just a repetition of history. From 1851, Colonel Gordon, owner of the lands of Barra, Invernesshire, Scotland, came to the conclusion that the small croft system was not giving him enough return in rent, and he set about in the most diabolical manner to get rid of the crofters from Barra. The gallant Colonel had previously tried to get rid of Barra by offering for penal settlement purposes to the State. Great discontent at that time was caused among the crofters by the action of the British Government in withdrawing the grant it had previously given for improvement and cultivation of the Highlands, and placing it in an immigration fund.

This gave Colonel Gordon his opportunity, so he thereupon chartered transport ships to sail up to Lock Boisdale, and he ordered the people under a penalty of \$10.00 to assemble at the ships, where many of them were forcibly seized and carried aboard. Others, who resisted, were handcuffed. Those who were lucky enough to escape were hunted and chased over the hills like the early Covenanters. Fathers and mothers were separated from their families. From 1,500 to 2,000 people were transported.

Picture the scene of hungry women wailing in Gaelic for the sons they would never see again—for in those days unless you laid in a stock of provisions for six weeks, the captain of the vessel generally obliged the passengers to pay as much as 400 per cent. on the cost price of food. Here was a people driven from their native land, and finally landing in Canada, starving, ill-clad, and not knowing a word of the English language; trekking on foot from Quebec to Toronto to

Hamilton, where with their starving families they tried to eke out a living by day labor or begging a wretched existence. Is it any wonder that a strong wave of indignation swept over Canada. The Quebec Times, after describing the scenes of how the mothers wrap the frozen remains of their dead infants in a few frozen rags, and with a Celtic wail of despair, consign them to a hole in the frozen earth, had this to say:

"The expulsion of these unfortunate creatures from their homes—the man-hunt with the policemen and bailiffs—the violent separation of families—the parents torn from the child, the mother from her daughter—the infamous trickery practiced on those who did embark—the abandonment of the aged, the infirm women and tender children in a foreign land—form a tableaux which cannot be dwelt on for an instant without horror. Words cannot depict the atrocity of the deed. For cruelty less savage, the dealers of the South have been held to the execration of the world."

The year 1851 saw every crofter in Barra evicted and everything they possessed confiscated.—"Our Noble Families," by Thomas Johnstone.

Unless we in Canada are prepared to free the land, what guarantee have we that the generation yet unborn in Canada may not be subjected to treatment like this from a privileged class?

THE SOLDIERS AND THE SOCIALISTS.

A Prediction Based Upon Analysis.

At present the aims and activities of no two classes of people seem wider apart than those of the Soldiers and the Socialists. One class is for conscription—the other against. One is for war—the other against. One holds peaceful meetings to denounce capitalism—the other breaks up the meetings and attacks the Socialists.

It is not "legal" for the soldiers to break up socialist meetings. But the capitalists and their newspapers applaud when this is done. The capitalists do not desire the socialists to get a hearing, because the socialists point out that wars are for the rich; that the soldiers are dying for their benefit, for the sake of their trade; that the capitalists are exploiting the workers, praising them when they become soldiers, but using them for selfish commercial purposes.

The soldiers come chiefly from the working classes. So long as the newspapers can incite the soldiers to oppose the socialists, so long will they keep Canadian workmen from uniting to put an end to the exploitation and deception of the present time.

First, the workers build up a great economic system. Then, when the capitalists in different countries go to war for economic supremacy, they appeal to the workers to fight their battles. They say it is a war of defence, of liberty, of justice; and many believe these things and go to fight against other workers who were fooled in the same way. In most countries it is now too hard to fool enough workers, so the governments use conscription to make them go.

The governments are really executives which look after the interests of the bankers and manufacturers—the capitalists in general. The governments never treat the workers fairly. And the governments never treat the soldiers fairly. The Canadian Government is much the same as other governments.

The socialists are showing how the workers are kept in wage slavery to the rich. The soldiers who were workers before they enlisted understand the conditions the socialists point out. After the war the soldiers will have to go back to the same or worse conditions, unless the socialists can change them.

Suppose the Allies have defeated

Germany and the war is over. The men who come back will have to go into the factories and mines to work for other people, just as before the war. Those who are soldiers now will have to become the wage slaves of the big Canadian capitalists.

The soldiers are not gaining any real freedom even for themselves if while they are fighting against other soldiers the rich people at home are left ready in a position to exploit them when they come back.

Many of the returned soldiers are already dissatisfied with the treatment they have received from the authorities, and to protect their interests they have formed associations. The men are beginning to see through much of the cheap praise they are getting from the newspapers.

The papers are practically all for the soldiers, but they are for the capitalists, too. They will not be for the soldiers all the time, but only so long as they are serving the capitalists. As soon as peace transforms the uniformed man back into an ordinary employee his interests will be lost sight of or subordinated to those of the rich.

Before there can be complete freedom all the working people must unite to wrest it from their capitalist governments. Those who are soldiers now will help in this. They cannot afford not to help. To win a war against a foreign government means very little so long as your own government belongs to those who exploit you.

Many of the soldiers understand this now. But the wealthy people who control Canadian affairs do not want the soldiers to see this. They want to have the soldiers set against the socialists so that the capitalists can "put it over" both sections of the working class.

In many countries, notably in Russia, the workman and soldiers realize that they should be united against their economic masters. And the message of socialism will soon reach the minds and hearts of the soldiers in Canadian cities—it will spread amongst them.

Thousands of soldiers will say: "We have won a war for the capitalists—now let us win in a struggle for ourselves." The soldiers and socialists will stand absolutely united against their common exploiters.

The Canadian capitalists will not like that; the big and little capitalist newspapers will not like that. But that is what is going to happen.

Mervyn Smith.

POLICE FOR 'OPPRESSION.'

An Emanation of the Prussian Spirit.

We beg to draw Forward readers' attention to the following excerpts in order that they may fully appreciate the "Wondrous Liberty" they will incidentally be fighting for in the event of conscription being placed upon the Statute Book by the imperious political jobbers and anti-Democrats in Ottawa.

Board of Control,
Toronto, June 26, 1917.

Mr. I. Bainbridge,
363 Spadina Ave., Toronto.

Dear Sir,—I beg to forward herewith an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Control, held on June 26th, as follows:

A communication was read from Mr. I. Bainbridge, Secretary of the Anti-Conscription League, advising that he is instructed by the League to request permission to hold a meeting in the north end of Queen's Park, or any other convenient location that may be prescribed by the Mayor, the subject of such meeting to be "The proposed compulsory military service measures of the Borden administration."

Ordered: That Mr. Bainbridge be advised that the Board are of opinion

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