

CHAPTER XXVIII

REVOLUTIONARY INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM (Continued)

Sabotage. — Closely associated with the terms described in the closing pages of the last chapter is the newer term sabotage. In this word lies the greatest indefiniteness of meaning. Even its origin seems to be somewhat in dispute. A good introduction to the idea is given by John Spargo in his book, *Syndicalism, Industrial Unionism and Socialism*, where he relates some personal experiences connected with what he asserts to be the first use of both the word and the idea. The story is given here in condensed form.

An Account of Origin of Name. — In 1895 there was in England a revival of interest in industrial unionism. Spargo with others were actively engaged in advocating the One Big Union idea. An aggressive industrial union was formed known as the International Federation of Ship, Dock, and Riverside Workers. Strikes were called by this union and were lost again and again. The whole organization was in danger of going to pieces. The men were sick of unsuccessful strikes. Political action was suggested, but discarded as of no practical promise. Experiences of other unions in parliamentary tactics offered no inducement. Moreover, most of the men in these occupations had no vote. At this juncture, with such a cheerless outlook, another policy was proposed: "Strike by stealth while keeping on the pay roll." When a workman "takes every advantage to slacken his efforts and to waste his time he is said by the English to be 'soldiering.'" But the English expression was too plain and matter of fact. A Scotch colloquialism was chosen in its place, the more "picturesque expression" *ca' canny* which means "go slow" or "be careful not to do too much." Workers were urged to adopt this *ca' canny* policy to "regard the employer and his agents as their natural enemies and to regard it as their duty to their class to strike the employers'