

THE REVOLT OF LABOR

One of the most remarkable situations in the history of the American labor movement was that caused by the recent revolt of the Boston telephone girls. Goaded to desperation by their miserable wages and working conditions, 2,200 of these girls decided to strike if their demands were not granted. The telephone company, realizing the strategic position of the hello girls and their power to paralyze Boston's industrial life by a strike, took most vigorous measures to prevent or break the threatened strike. While sparring for time by means of conferences, etc., they sent hasty calls for scabs to their offices in surrounding cities. By means of threats and bribes, about 1,000 girl operators in various cities were induced to become scabs. They were loaded into special coaches, all properly equipped with chaperones, and rushed to Boston. They were there lodged at the most fashionable hotels, and generally made much of during the several days they awaited the performance of their heroic functions as scabs. Meanwhile the Boston telephone girls received concessions from their employers, and the threatened strike was averted. The silk stocking scabs de luxe were then hurried back to their homes and jobs to slave in readiness for the next opportunity to more securely fasten the fetters about their own necks by breaking the strike of their more courageous sisters. Truly a disgusting exhibition of working class ignorance and cowardice, relieved only by the gallant uprising of the Boston girls.

The Erdman Act arbitration board that has been considering the railroad firemen's demands has rendered its decision. As was to be expected, the firemen got the worst of it. While a few concessions were granted them, the principal ones they contended for, such as the employing of two firemen upon the larger engines, were denied them. In consequence, the firemen are much discontented, and the principle of arbitration has received another much needed jolt.

During the past year the workers have had greater and more costly experience with arbitration than ever before. Vast numbers of them, in various industries and at different times, have submitted their grievances to arbitration boards. And always with the same result: a defeat for the workers. Soon the latter will learn that they have nothing to hope for from the arbitration hocus-pocus, per se, and that the only way for them to secure concessions is to build up powerful labor unions, and with them wring these concessions from their masters by brute force; or, as suffices in many cases, by displaying a thorough willingness to use this force. Once the workers have such militant and powerful unions, they can coerce "justice" from every arbitration board, however constructed, and until they are thus in a position to use coercion, they can expect "justice" from no arbitration board, no matter of whom it consists.

A fine illustration has been recently given of the growing solidarity of the Chicago building trades unions: The marble-setters declared a general strike on March 1st. Not daring to replace them by scabs, the bosses ignored their strike, giving them the "silent treatment." By making no effort to finish the marble work, or by changing the specifications so as to permit the use of other material than marble, they hoped to break the strike when the marble work would be completed according to the original specifications. Perceiving the danger in these tactics, the other building trades unions decided to declare general strikes on every building requiring marble work. Accordingly, several skyscrapers were completely tied up, the various craft unions, in spite of their alleged handicap of autonomy, striking as one union. These tactics quickly reduced the bosses to submission, and they satisfactorily settled the marble-workers' difficulty.

At the end of March the A. F. of L. had 2,007,650 members. This is the high-water mark in its history, and an increase of about 250,000 since the convention last November. The increase is to be ascribed to a number of causes, chief of which are the great number of strikes A. F. of L. unions have won recently, the intense organizing campaigns being carried on by the various international unions, and the general wave of enthusiasm and militancy known as the "Labor Forward Movement." Judging by the new spirit prevailing in the A. F. of L., it will be but a short time until it will add another million to its already huge hosts.

Trouble is looked for in 1915 in the Chicago building trades, as the bosses are making all contracts to expire at that time. It is believed they are preparing for a general lockout in the hope of thus crushing the aggressively militant Chicago building trades unions. From the temper of the latter, it is safe to prophesy that the bosses will have a merry job on their hands in 1915.

The great Belgian general strike for manhood suffrage has been called off. Exact details are not yet at hand, but according to press reports the settlement was reached upon the vague promise of the government to appoint a committee to consider electoral reforms.

The big I. W. W. strike of Paterson silk workers is developing into a second Lawrence affair. At present writing preparations are being made to ship several thousand of the strikers' children to neighboring cities to be there cared for. Many of the strike leaders are being thrown into jail on trumped-up charges.

In its six weeks of existence the new A. F. of L. lumber workers' union organizing in the Northwest has secured 5,000 members. An intense agitation is being carried on throughout the lumber districts, and judging by the results being achieved, undoubtedly before the winter sets in the lumber workers, for the first time, will have a substantial union organized.

WM. Z. FOSTER.

BE IN THE VAN OF PROGRESS.

To the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters: Brothers:—For some years past, the International Federation of Pottery Workers has appealed to the N. B. of O. P. to join the organization. Those appeals have been made in vain.

The A. F. of L., to which we belong, is affiliated with the European unions, and nearly all unions composing it are organized internationally. If we desire to be in the van of progress we must at once fall into line.

Everything in the march of progress leads to internationalism. All discoveries and inventions contribute to the suppression of artificial boundaries. Telegraph and telephones encircle the earth; railroads run in all directions; vessels cross the ocean—all tend to annihilate distances, and the mobility of the world's races points the way to internationalism.

There already exists an international exchange of ideas, in the shape of books, reviews, and newspapers, which carries through the world over, and we now know what is going on in Europe and even in China; knowledge is ours which was beyond the reach of our forefathers.

In the great human laboratory the fusion of all men without distinction of race, is taking place. This has to be so, in order that we may reach our final goal as unionists—the possession of food and all the other necessities and comforts of life, which should be at the disposal of all, as certain and as free as the air we breathe. For this purpose we must unite, not only in cities, states and countries, but internationally.

It may be said that we do not need the fraternal solidarity of workers of other countries. That is a very narrow, and to my mind, selfish view to take; for if we do not need it they do; and there can be no doubt that in fraternizing with European Potters, we would increase our power, besides contributing immensely to the progress of unionism.

As a whole, our conditions may be bearable, but what of the individuals in our ranks, who, on account of sickness or other trouble, are living in misery and poverty even lacking bread for their starving children? In this imperfectly organized society, what happens to one of us sooner or later happens to all.

Brothers, I appeal to you to instruct your delegates to the next convention of the N. B. of O. P. to use every effort to bring about the affiliation of our National Union to the International Federation of Pottery Workers.

Fraternally yours,

JULES SCARCERIAUX,

Delegate to the C. L. U. from Local No. 45.

WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH MEXICO?

The Metropolitan Magazine for May has an article "What's the Matter With Mexico," by John Kenneth Turner. "Seven thousand families hold practically all of the arable land." That's what's the matter.