

THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT

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DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

The spirit of the Russian Revolution, which is the spirit of the new time, is reaching, gradually and tentatively as yet, but quite distinctly, the rank and file workers of this country, as of all others. Independence and initiative are growing apace amongst the workers; they are beginning to look at life and the world from their own standpoint; beginning at last to act without prompting. In Japan rice riots break out against the profiteers. In Britain every day brings its rank and file strike.

The workers are finding that month after month passes in futile negotiations whilst a strike brings an immediate solution of the grievance. Since the Government's first call to women to replace men in war service the trade union officials have been pledged to secure that women should not do men's work at lower rates of pay; it is vital to the man and his family, to the trade union, as well as the woman concerned, that women shall not be employed at lower rates of pay; but unequal pay standards have been tolerated and it is evident that they would have been tolerated, like so many abuses—including the abuse of capitalism itself—with less and less protest on the part of the union officials, had it not been for the defiant strike of the women who draw the unequal pay. Now, if the women workers stand firm equal pay will be established, just as the leaving certificates under the Munitions Act were abolished by a rank and file strike; just as the embargo will be abolished if the rank and file remain determined that it shall.

At one time the rank and file workers were often nursed and stimulated into some semblance of self-respecting discontent, some largely pretended much exaggerated mass action by a few energetic individuals who usually became officials; to-day the mass action is real and spontaneous; it is the officials, those who are emancipated from the toil of the bench, who are pushed onward. The Labour movement is industrially no longer a stage army but the old guard who worked for this day do not like it very much now it is here. The struggle which the co-operators are putting up against the Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees is an evidence of that.

Whilst industrially the rank and file of the movement is beginning to sweep aside the old officials and the old subservient policy of the willing, humble wage-slave; politically the movement is still in the earlier stage of development.

The workers have largely thrown off the glamour which at first led the mass of them to judge the war and all pertaining to it from the capitalist standpoint. There is a general feeling now in the Labour movement that the workers should have some say in regard to the peace settlement; there is a general feeling now that an international meeting of workers' representatives should take place. But again passports have been refused and there seems to be no suggestion for dealing with the situation save that of passing a resolution. The idea that the workers' industrial power should be used to compel the issue of passports as yet seems fantastically extreme to the mass of the Labour delegates; still more extreme that Labour should use its industrial power to force the Government to offer terms of peace dictated by Labour.

In the field of world politics the rank and file workers as yet show no sign of an awakening comparable with that which has taken place in regard to workshop matters. Still there are "Labour representatives" in the Government; still Mr. Henderson desires to be the leader of the movement for the international without breaking altogether with the Government. His latest publicly-made complaint that the German Socialists have declared the Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist War Aims Manifesto to be "far too partial," and his apparent deduction that therefore the manifesto must be insisted upon by Allied Labour should be enough to depose him from the position of leader, for, indeed, the manifesto is exceedingly one-sided and imperialistic, as everyone who reads it must inwardly acknowledge.

Whilst Labour hesitates, only as yet feeling its feet in the smaller matters of day to day workshop life and wages, leaving the great international movements which bear with governing force on

QUESTIONS

BULGARIA.

It is reported that a revolution may be about to take place in Bulgaria. This need not surprise us. Already in 1913 the Bulgarian Parliamentary elections resulted in the return of 37 Socialists out of 112 members. The Socialists with the aid of members of the Peasants' League held a majority of the seats and demanded a democratic republic and an independent confederation of Balkan States. The Government, therefore, refused to summon Parliament until after a new election in which by police violence a small majority was obtained for the established order. In the General Election of 1911 not one Socialist candidate had been returned. The rapid growth of the Socialist vote was due to the experience of the war. The experience of a still greater war and the example of the Russian Revolution shortly may produce decisive results. In expectation of this jingoes are raising the cry of "No separate peace with Bulgaria."

LORD ROBERT CECIL'S REPLY TO DR. SOLF.

Lord Robert Cecil's reply to Dr. Solf is not of the stuff which would bring peace nearer. Though a Tory Lord Robert has the reputation of being a gentleman. It is therefore a pity to find him saying that the force of what Dr. Solf, the German Foreign Minister, said the other day "about commonsense and the horrors of war" "is entirely destroyed by the fact that until the tide of war appeared to change we heard nothing about such doctrines." On the contrary German Ministers, like British Ministers, have continually professed their love of peace, whilst waging war with all their might. And what of the many "peace intrigues" and "peace offensives" of which Lord Robert himself has from time to time warned us? He further said that there has been no proposal to annex the German colonies, but that "Mr. Balfour and others have said that it is impossible to resume control of her colonies." Oh, for a little honest frankness!

JOHN BURNS.

So Mr. Burns has at last joined the Labour Party. We believe that the war has changed both Mr. Burns and the Party.

CENSORED.

It is curious to note that it is forbidden to send abroad the Official Reports of Parliamentary Debates.

everyone's daily affairs, the world is being changed. America, spending 50 per cent more per day on the war than Britain which was till now the main purse bearer of the Allies, is ousting this country from its ruling place on the seas. According to a *Manchester Guardian* correspondent the British output of new ships in July was 141,948 tons, whilst that of America was 421,296 tons. Prior to the war American shipbuilding was held to be of no account. In 1911 the shipping owned by America for foreign trade was only about 850,000 tons.

The change which, as though by magic, has deposed Great Britain from the position of first maritime power is momentous; but it is as nothing to the great change from capitalism to socialism, on the brink of which mankind is struggling. Whilst organised Labour is yet politically asleep, British workers are being sent to oppose socialism in Russia where first it has appeared. Bulgaria now shows signs of following Russia, and already there is an outcry that even should Bulgaria transform itself into a democracy, the Allies must give her no quarter in this war for democracy. The revolution in Austria may come at any time. To continue fighting against the Austrian revolutionaries in support of particular counter-revolutionary factions would be as easy to Allied capital as it is in Russia.

In Russia the Government of the Workers and Peasants still wonderfully maintains its power in spite of everything. Arthur Ransome in *The Daily News* reports that after three days without bread, rioting broke out in Petrograd. He says:—

"The Petrograd riot seems an exact counterpart of several similar hunger troubles in the provincial towns, where the opposition parties have tried to excite the mob to the point of smashing the Soviet, and then proved their own inability to provide an efficient substitute. The result of a short period of anarchy has usually ended in the re-establishment of the Soviet. In one instance the Church got control of the mob; the Soviet was destroyed, whereupon the mob turned on the Church, and, by a strange irony, Church relics were defended by a few Jewish students. Thereafter the town was flooded with hooligans from the surrounding country, who declared simultaneously their intentions and their sense of humour by erecting one night twenty little gibbets in front of the church, and hanging the town's watch dogs, which remained swinging as the last relics of law and order until the subsequent re-establishment of the Soviet, when the normal life of the town was resumed and the hooligans suppressed."

Hence whilst famine may drive despairing, disorderly sections of the populace to abandon the Soviets. The mass of the people swiftly return to these—their own representative Councils!

British workers will you remain the passive spectators, the inarticulate tools in the great struggle between the old regime of capitalism and the uprising workers of the world?

E. SYLVIA PANKHURST.