

THE COMMUNIST

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The Labor Parley

THE Industrial Conference has met disaster. It has met disaster not because of the uncompromising attitude of the "labor" representatives, but because capital would not make any concessions at all.

That "labor" representatives should participate in such a Conference was in itself an indication of conservative and non-class purposes. The A. F. of L. representatives' first move was to introduce a resolution urging the Steel interests to arbitrate the strike. The resolution was decisively beaten. After intervening days of futile talk and solemnly hysterical protestations from Samuel Gompers of organized labor's loyalty and patriotism, another test developed on the resolution to approve "collective bargaining." This resolution indicates equally the criminally limited purposes of the A. F. of L. and the determination of capital to make absolutely no concessions. This is the resolution:

"The right of wage earners to organize without discrimination, to bargain collectively, to be represented by representatives of their own choosing in negotiations and adjustments with employers in respect to wages, hours of labor, and relations and conditions of employment, is recognized."

This resolution is exceedingly mild. Its acceptance by capital would mean little to the working class; its spirit and purpose condemns the workers to an eternal struggle for more wages, emphasizing the commodity struggle as against the class struggle. The resolution, typical of the miserable policy of the A. F. of L., means an acceptance of Capitalism and its wage-slavery.

But the representatives of capital rejected the resolution!

The astute representatives of capital realize that the prevailing situation is dangerous. They realize that conditions are accumulating a mass of social dynamite that circumstances may ignite in a revolutionary upflare. It is necessary, in order to maintain the supremacy of Capitalism, that protective means be adopted. Repression is being used, but it is not enough. The radical spirit of the masses develops in spite of repression. The astute representatives of Capitalism, accordingly, consider it necessary to supplement repression with conciliation. Conciliation with whom? With the conservative elements of labor, which means the dominant representatives of the A. F. of L.

The representatives of the A. F. of L. fear a revolutionary upflare as much as capital; at the industrial conference they held up the spectre of the "Bolshevik" spirit in the unions, insisting that it was becoming difficult to "keep the lid down." Former President Taft stated the problem from the standpoint of Capitalism:

"The employers' group in the Conference

can greatly help the conservative labor leaders in their struggle to regain and retain control of the unions if they will recognize the vital importance of doing so and make reasonable concessions. Collective bargaining... should be granted freely... Recognition of the leaders to this extent strengthens them with their followers, instills in them a worthy pride to fulfill their contracts and strengthens their conservative influence with the members of the union."

The rejection of collective bargaining by the representatives of capital may appear strange. The co-operation of employers and union officials, while not avowed, has been a fact. The whole tendency of trades unionism makes for just this co-operation. Moreover, the tendency of modern Capitalism itself, of Imperialism, drives Laborism and Capitalism to closer co-operation against the oncoming proletarian revolution.

Then why the break at the Industrial Conference between capital and "labor"?

It may appear as an accidental circumstance determined by the particular individuals chosen to represent capital, and not at all representative. But the reasons are much more fundamental.

Capitalism, the dominant interests of Capitalism, is apparently determined to act uncompromisingly. "It has come to a test," they feel, "and we must meet the test." Capitalism is provoking labor to a clash believing that the clash will find capital stronger than labor. If Capitalism can provoke this clash and conquer the workers in blood, then Capitalism can maintain its supremacy without making any concessions; if the situation becomes too critical, there is always time for concessions and compromise—particularly as the trades union officials will eagerly accept compromise.

The uncompromising attitude of capital at the Industrial Conference is not a challenge to the labor leaders: these would sneak back willingly and continue their miserable bargain-counter negotiations. The issue is much more vital: Capitalism has issued a challenge to the proletariat, the challenge of words at the Industrial Conference and the challenge of blood in Gary. Let the proletariat answer the challenge!

The proletariat has unsuspected resources of strength and initiative which the revolutionary crisis will develop. Capital does not sense these resources. Let the proletariat assume the offensive: let it repudiate its traitorous leaders and rally to the Communist struggle against Capitalism.

Blockade Resolution

THE First Russian Branch of the Communist Party of New York City, in declining to participate with "The United Conference of Russian Organizations" for action against the blockade of Soviet Russia, expresses its attitude in a resolution the gist of which is:

"The blockade of Soviet Russia by the world imperialists is an expression of Capitalism, and the question of lifting this blockade accordingly is part of our revolutionary struggle against world Imperialism, thus becoming a political question. Our branch, as a unit of the Communist Party of America, must follow the program and constitution of the party, which prohibits members or branches taking part in any political action in conjunction with organizations not accepting the principles of Communism; moreover, the Conference of Russian Organizations is composed of non-partisan, Anarchist and even religious groups which only yesterday were counter-revolutionary. The branch therefore will take part only in the campaign against the blockade directed by the Communist Party."

The Public

THE most amusing feature of the Industrial Conference was the representation accorded "the public," equal to that of "labor" and capital. "The public" in any event is bound to the interests of capital; but the particular representatives designated by President Wilson are directly capitalist.

Among the representatives of "the public" were: John D. Rockefeller, Jr., representing super-trust capital; Elbert H. Gary of the Steel Trust; Fuller E. Callaway, cotton manufacturer and bank president; Bernard M. Baruch, stock speculator; H. B. Endicott, director in one bank, a Trust Company, and four industrial concerns. All but 1 of the 24 representatives of "the public" are directly capitalist in affiliations.

But even if the representatives of "the public" were not directly capitalist in affiliation, they would still on fundamental issues unite with the capitalist representatives.

What is "the public"? The capitalist press and bourgeois liberals designate "the public" as being the great mass of the people. This is sheer fiction. There are in modern Capitalism two great social groups—the capitalist class and the proletariat. The capitalist class comprises the owners of industry, dominantly the masters of concentrated industry; the proletariat comprises the wage workers, dominantly the unskilled labor in the basic industry. In between you have what might be designated "the public"—the small employers and investors, the professionals and intellectuals, clerks, technicians and certain categories of skilled labor. The public, accordingly, is the small bourgeoisie either in actual social status or in ideology.

Contrary to a general superstition, "the public" has no independent life of its own. Power is concentrated at the two extremes,—the larger capitalists and the proletariat. "The public" must vacillate between the two; it may "favor" labor but in crucial issues it accepts Capitalism. The psychology of the public was aptly expressed in a declaration of one of "the public" representatives at the Industrial Conference: "The United States Steel Corporation is a public nuisance and should be suppressed. And I want to go further and say the labor leaders who are conducting the steel strike are a public nuisance." There you are—the typical in-between policy of a class without social solidarity.

On every vital issue "the public" is reactionary. It may have an electoral importance, but in the test of power between the capitalist class and the proletariat, this importance dwindles. "The public" provides the deceptive measures that are used to lead the workers astray; and in the final test of power "the public" will provide the forces of counter-revolutionary soldiery—precisely as this "public" has organized "guard formations" in the steel strike zones. But it plays a sickly role, since it has no independence of its own, being the vassal of big capital.

"The public" is hammered equally by the capitalist class and the proletariat; it vacillates between the two; it provides the impetus for reformism, pacifism and other utopias, without power to realize any. The proletariat, in its struggle for power, must concern itself neither with capital nor "the public," but crush them equally as a necessary means for realizing Communism. The militant proletariat, moreover, must particularly guard itself against the "radical" representatives of "the public," since they express that treacherous petty bourgeois ideology directly promoting disaster for the proletariat and the proletarian revolution.