

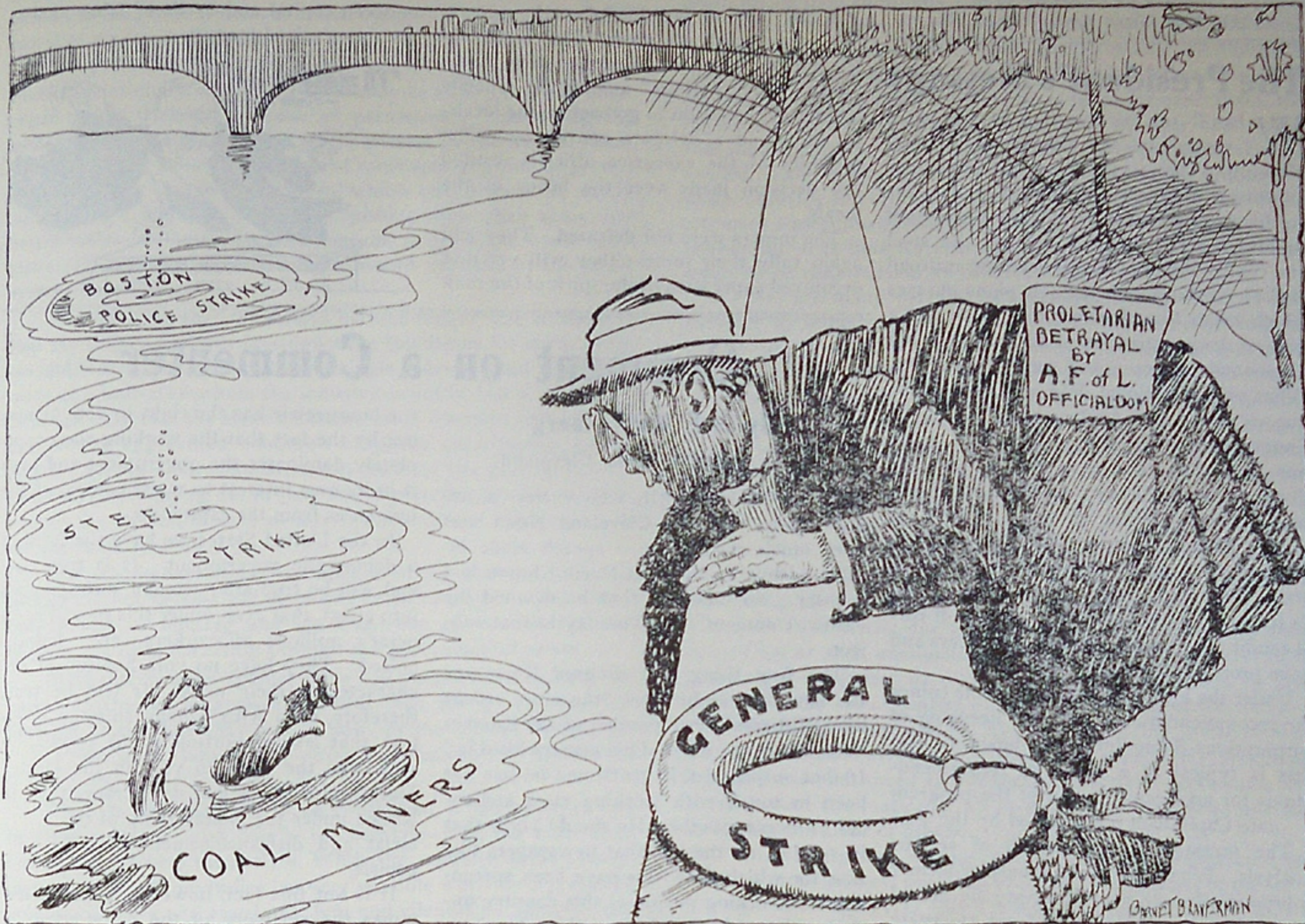
The Communist

ALL Power To The Workers!

Vol. 1. No. 11.

DECEMBER 13th, 1919.

Five Cents



THE SYMPATHETIC SPECTATOR

Where is the Power?

DURING the war administrative boards were set up at Washington to dictate the economic life of the nation. American business, which had bitterly opposed everything along the line of governmental economic regulation, quietly accepted the new order of things. For the most part, as the records clearly show, this regulation was not inimical to the most exorbitant profits. It was largely a matter of business men dealing with the government through themselves as government agents, or at any rate through their more or less direct special representatives at Washington.

But there was the period of the railroad breakdown and, early in 1918, the drastic mandates closing up business in order to conserve coal. Similar measures were taken as to other essentials of production. Against this most severe and highly arbitrary control of the economic life of the nation there was considerable protest—but no disobedience.

The war compelled a temporary shift from the normal business anarchy in the United States to an orderly economic activity in behalf of the war. American business accepted this economic rule, with its own special representatives at the helm, because of the collective American business interest in the war.

During the last few days American business has again been put under the arbitrary and absolute control of government administrators, due to the coal shortage. There is much grumbling—but no disobedience.

On the whole, given a few days for adjustment, it appears to be a fairly easy matter to establish by edict a universal six-hour day, allowing for some few exceptions and variations for special cases. It appears to be not anarchic but the essence of orderliness to redistribute the coal supply according to the immediate social needs. It appears the better course not to rely on individual

initiative but on central administration guided by exact information as to the economic life in its entirety.

It appears, then, that the coal supply can determine the transition from business anarchy to business order. It appears that the essential element of business order is the elimination of independent individual control in favor of informed central control. When the productive life of the nation attains the point where it is divided up into a few great business enterprises, absolutely dependent upon one another, as all business is now dependent upon coal mining, then the continuity and efficiency of each of the great departments of production becomes the most vital concern of all the people of the nation.

At the same moment that the Wilsonian administration enforces this adjustment of the life of the whole nation to the short supply of coal, it also enters into the conflict between miners and operators which is the cause of the coal shortage. In this aspect of the government activity we see very quickly a high degree of tolerance for the profits of the coal operators and a high degree of intolerance for the wage and hour demands of the coal miners. We see an attempt to use judicial and military power to compel men to work at dictated wages and to crush the resistance which the miners can make because they are effectively organized—a resistance which consists only of collective refusal to go into the mines, a purely passive and peaceful resistance.

But a coal shortage of itself threatens a collapse of the entire economic life of the nation. The coal strike of itself has the full tendency and effect of a general strike. If less than half a million workers can thus compel a revolution in the economic system in the United States, and if this sort of organized action continues and takes on larger and larger proportions, it is apparent

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