

THE COMMUNIST

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The President's Message

WHAT on the question of the peace treaty and the League of Nations? Nothing. What on the President's own war venture in Russia? Nothing. What on the seething agitation for predatory intervention in Mexico? Nothing. What on the steel and coal strikes and the threatening railroad strike? Nothing, except a few pious phrases which mean less than nothing, such as "a general democratization of all industry" and "a council of peace and amity," etc., etc. What on the national debt and the billions due us from our bankrupt allies? That Congress shall relax the tariff to ease up on our favorable balance of trade, but that Congress shall go easy on the income and profits taxes. What on the high cost of living? That the farmers shall be coaxed to grow more foodstuffs and shall be kept generally contented. Also, another conference, "a fresh, comprehensive survey made of rural conditions." Also, swat the profiteers and have proper cold storage labels.

Under the high cost of living theme comes the recommendation for federal licensing of corporations doing interstate business, and this is typical of a series of recommendations for an intensification of the program of State Capitalism inaugurated by the war.

The message is not worthy of serious analysis. Where it is not a rehash of former solutions, already proved empty by actual test, it is mere verbiage—and not as ornate as the usual Wilson verbiage.

The capitalist press featured in glaring headlines the dominant theme of Wilsonian statesmanship: down with the "passionate and malevolent agitators." Even here the message is not as "strong" as the headlines would indicate, because it seems to admit that punishing the evil agitators will not of itself cure all the economic and social ills of the nation.

This is an unfortunate admission. It shows a confusion of thought. Why not just blame it all on the agitators and let it go at that? Because the moment it is admitted that there are problems and causes, need for remedies and all that sort of thing, how on earth are you going to determine when agitation for one remedy or another is "passionate and malevolent?"

Simple. My kind is good and just; yours is vicious and criminal—even if my kind is worthless. Swat the Bolsheviki! Wilsonian statesmanship!

How Soon in Italy?

DEMONSTRATION and counter-demonstration in Italy, with toll of bloodshed and deaths, means that the revolution is in full progress. Of the dramatic demonstration of the Socialist bloc in the Parliament against the King the press gave us barely enough lines to know that such an event happened—though it is historically even more significant than the anti-Kaiser demonstration in the German Reichstag in March 1914.

The Italian Socialists in the Parliament refuse the oath and all homage to the monarchial government as the representatives of a powerful division of the Communist International. There is nothing to conjecture about what it all means. There is only one question: how soon?

How soon in Italy?

End of the Coal Strike

ONE item in the official conference on the President's terms of surrender to the miners tells the whole inner story of the strike. The "radicals" among the officials wanted the question to go back to the locals, by means of a delegate convention. The majority of the executive officials wanted the decision made over the heads of the locals.

The miners were not defeated. They will again rally their forces; they will yet find organized expression of the spirit of the rank

and file. A revolution within American unionism cannot be held off much longer.

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Gossip is only gossip, but how are we to account for the persistent rumors going back over two weeks at least that the strike would end on the tenth of December? Colossal stage play, indeed, if all that intervened has been by pre-arrangement! But even this is well within the possibilities of an alliance between capital and "yellow" labor against the unorganized masses.



Comment on a Commenter

By C. E. Ruthenberg

From *Socialist News*, Cleveland.

BENJAMIN KARR, who writes "Comments" for the *Cleveland News* was very much aroused by a speech made by Albert Rhys Williams at North Church last Sunday. So much so that he devoted his entire "comment" last Tuesday to that subject.

The first thing that aroused Karr was the fact that, as he says, "the more ardent his (Williams') championing of the Russian 'reds' the better most of his hearers liked it." If that surprised this gentleman he has not been in touch with working class audiences in recent months. He should know that in spite of all the lies that newspapers like that for which he writes have been spreading, the working people of this country understand that in Russia something has happened that is of tremendous import to them, and it is only necessary to mention the word "Bolsheviki" before a working class audience to secure a tremendous response. This is true in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, east or west, north or south.

The naive surprise which Mr. Karr expresses on this point, is not, however, the important part of his article. He attempts to prove that Williams was unfair and partisan. As an illustration he cites the fact that the speaker said that if in Russia there is a Dictatorship of the Proletariat in this country we have a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The latter statement is characterized as being "absolutely untrue." It is untrue, Mr. Karr says, because "there can be nothing which justifies the name 'dictatorship' in any country which has free elections, with universal suffrage, at the foundation of all its governmental institutions and power."

This is the kind of argument which writers such as he have been making for many years. They attempt to delude the workers by pointing to the form of government, ignoring the fact.

It may be news to Mr. Karr, but it is true nevertheless, that Lenin himself does not consider the disfranchisement of the bourgeoisie as an essential characteristic of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. He has said in his writings on the subject that, in some countries this dictatorship may be established without disfranchising the bourgeoisie. Whether a Dictatorship of the Proletariat exists is not determined by whether

the bourgeoisie has the right to vote or not, but by the fact that the working class completely dominates the government and uses it in its own interest to wrest control of the industries from the capitalists.

In the United States we have the form of a democratic government. It is true now and will be true after woman suffrage goes into effect, that even under this formal democracy millions of workers are disfranchised. They have no vote because of the character of their work. It will be true, therefore, even with woman suffrage in effect, that less proportion of the population will have the right to vote in the United States, with its formal democracy, than in Russia under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and disfranchisement of the bourgeoisie.

It is not this fact, however, which determines the existence of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in this country. It is not a question of the basis of the franchise but of fact, and the man who can deny that in practice the capitalists dominate and control the government of the United States is really more successful in fooling himself than seems possible. Even Woodrow Wilson in 1912 was compelled to admit the truth of the statement that the capitalists dominated the government of this country.

The dictatorship of the bourgeoisie is maintained by its control of the sources of information. The capitalists need not worry about the workers having the right to vote so long as they completely control the sources of information which determine how the workers will vote. So long as all the great newspapers, the schools, the pulpits and most of the magazines and periodicals are subject to the will of the capitalists, they can well afford to permit the workers to remain under the illusion that they are really determining something when they go to the polls to vote. The fact is, though, that these workers are merely approving what the capitalists have decided shall be done.

Another of Mr. Karr's criticisms is directed at Williams' praise of the Red Army. He calls attention to what he terms "the complete failure (of the Red Army) to stop the Germans and prevent the abject treaty of Brest-Litovsk." In this criticism Mr. Karr is not frank with himself nor with his readers. He knows as well as Williams, that there was no Red Army at the time of

(Continued on page 3)