

Where is the Power?

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that we are rapidly approaching a dictatorship by the organized workers. Therefore the frantic, ruthless and violent methods to defeat the big strikes and to check further organization.

It is not unionism and its dictation, however, which is being fought. After all it is very easy to accommodate prices and methods of production to higher wages and shorter hours. There is plenty of margin for profits without child labor and even with old age pensions. Many such concessions can be made, with nothing but benefit to the profit system, as actual experience in many countries has shown a hundred times over.

But there is always the danger—and it is a glaring danger in these revolutionary days—that there may be such a thing as labor organization with the purpose of permanently dominating the system of production in favor of the masses of the nation. That is, dictation not as to the interests of some special group or groups of workers (a spurious dictation which can always be easily circumvented and which demands nothing more than somewhat better terms for somewhat less than one-tenth of the workers)—but a real dictation against the permanent interests of the profit system as a system.

It is not only that the strikes become bigger, due to the fact that the single employer lays down the conditions for more workers and that all the employers in a single industry tend to become more of a unit even where the industry is not in fact a monopoly. It is not only that the strikes become more constant and general, due to the aggravated condition of prices outstripping wages. But the fact of such colossal strikes leads to the government interference now going on, in part an interference against the success of the strikes, in part an interference against the anarchy of the capitalist system.

State Capitalism makes it emphatic to the working class that its fight is not against the employer as an employer—that this is only a sort of feinting and sparring—but against all the employers in a heap operating through the governmental power.

State intervention against these big strikes must make it apparent to the working class not only that the government has decisive power, but that this is now, in the United States, the power of the bourgeoisie—exercised dictatorially against the working class.

There is another item to be considered, a fundamental fact in these struggles, and that is the breakdown of the caste lines among the workers themselves. While the capitalist press is playing up the "alien" prejudice in every possible way—by a prejudice propaganda only surpassed in extent and vileness by the prejudice campaign against the Bolsheviks and the whipping up of anti-negro sentiment—there is quietly going on the effective blending of nationalities and languages in the steel strike and the coal strike.

But it is not only the racial lines which account for caste ideals in the labor movement; it is even more the craft lines. These are being broken down by the changes in industry itself, by the inevitable tendency of the machine process toward a common level of semi-skilled labor.

As a net result of these tendencies the class idea comes ever more insistently to the front, and at the same time it is seen that the class struggle centers around the State and its control.

Capitalism is compelled to become more orderly, to recognize the interdependence of business enterprise and the social life, by

reason of the miners withholding their labor for a few weeks. We experience State Capitalism, the open class government of the capitalists, in absolute control of the economic life of the nation. Even the elective camouflage is dropped; the control is exercised through appointive administrators, themselves of the highest intimacy with and fidelity to the profit system.

The power to compel State Capitalism is the power to compel Communism! The power to compel a revolution within Capitalism, its voluntary acceptance of centralized control, is the power to achieve a revolution against Capitalism.

The strike which can force Capitalism to seek refuge in the State for its own continuity can go further. It can force Capitalism to accept administrative control at the hands of the workers themselves; it can turn this control into the drastic elimination of profits as a permanent policy, to the point of absolute elimination of profits in all business which is already so far centralized that capitalistic initiative exists no longer. For example, there is the coal industry itself. More mines are already in operation than are needed, if the work were better managed and if the mining was more intensive and efficient. The profit incentive now only makes for more wastefulness though it formerly served to get the mines opened up; it is time for central control of the coal mines in the interests of conservation and better management.

There are many persons who believe that this can be done industry by industry, with the workers of the particular industry in control. That is to overlook entirely the fact that everything depends on the ultimate political power, the State. So long as there is a State which represents the class power of the capitalists it is a mere playing with toys for some group of workers to have something to do with the management of their own industry. At the most it might mean an intrenchment of this particular group within the scheme of State Capitalism. That is the gist of the Plumb Plan and of similar schemes for government ownership which accept the capitalist State as the final organ of control.

The first requirement of the revolution against Capitalism is the setting up of a State power of the working class; firstly, to overcome the anarchy due to the breakdown of capitalistic enterprise (just as such administration is set up today to preserve the profit system against its own disturbances); secondly, to make permanent the social control of the economic life of the nation in favor of the working masses, by eliminating the profit element, i. e., by transfer of ownership to the people collectively, proceeding from the most advanced and important industries downward, until there is final elimination of all ownership which allows one man to exploit the labor of others.

This State power will be of a new distinctive character, corresponding to the new purposes of control. The State of the working class is called THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT because it frankly avows as its object arbitrary subjection of the economic life of the nation and of the world to the purposes of the working masses. This name also emphasizes the temporary character of such a State, in that it can only last as long as there is a capitalist class to be brought under labor control by dictatorship.

The power to strike in the basic industries is the power to establish THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT—if the strike makes its appeal in behalf of the whole working class, not alone in behalf of one group of organized workers. That appeal must be the Communist reconstruction of society.

Let the workers of America think over the coal strike—and they will understand and accept Communism.

Comment on a Commenter

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Brest-Litovsk. It was because there was no Red Army and the remnants of the army of the former czar refused to fight that the Bolsheviks agreed to the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The Red Army was created when the Czarist generals with the help of Allied Imperialism tried to drown the revolution in the blood of the workers.

The criticism which follows this is worth quoting in full. Mr. Karr says:

"In like manner he (Williams) pictured the landing of small Allied forces in Vladivostok, Archangel and Odessa as great and wanton invasions of Soviet Russia, with never a hint that they were sent to those ports to prevent vast stores of munitions, shipped to Russia when

Russia was one of the Allies, from falling into the hands of Germany, after Bolshevik Russia had crawled in the dirt before the Kaiser and had become a pliant tool of the German imperialists."

We suggest that Mr. Karr crawl in the dust to the feet of the editor of his own paper and have the editor read to him, from the column just above his comment on Williams, the following remarks about 113 American dead just returned from Archangel:

"Now that so many things hidden while the war was in progress are being brought to light, cannot the country be told why these 113 honored dead were sent to die in battle and hospital, of wounds, disease and hardship? Is it not time that the origin of the Archangel expedition received some of the same official attention and full publicity given the last sad act on the Hoboken pier?

The mourning parents of the dead, to say nothing of millions of other Americans, would like an answer to that as yet unanswered question.—By what authority were American soldiers sent to a distant country, against which there had been no declaration of war, and left there to suffer and die in a bootless and hopeless winter campaign against savage fanatics, who were so far from being recognized enemies of the United States that President Wilson was meanwhile sending emissaries to treat with them in friendly wise and invite them to conference?"

If your own paper thus strongly characterizes the sending of American soldiers to Archangel, Mr. Karr, is Mr. Williams "fanatically partisan" in raising the same objection? Or do you argue that the writer of the above quoted paragraph is also "fanatically" partisan toward Soviet Russia?