

The Revolutionary Age

A Chronicle and Interpretation of Events in Europe.

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ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY

By Local Boston, Socialist Party

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885 Washington St., Boston, Mass.

Bundle orders 2c a copy, Subscription \$1.00 for
six months (26 issues)

The Left Wing

ON other pages we print the Manifesto and Program of the newly formed Left Wing of the Socialist Party and also the Program of the Chicago Communist Propaganda League, while on the back page we have the Program of the Portland, Ore. Council of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors. All these documents are expressive of the present tendency in the Socialist and Labor movements of America, a tendency which is the reflex of the march of the Socialist and Labor movements of the world, and more particularly of Europe.

Europe is aflame with revolt, and, the bourgeois press to the contrary notwithstanding, this revolt is the spontaneous uprising of the masses themselves. In various places, as for instance England, Scotland and Ireland, the revolt is as much directed against the old time leaders and the old methods of narrow parochial and craft organizations as against anything else. The bourgeois press rejoices that the strikes in Britain are in many instances called in defiance of the old leaders, but if it was in any sense competent of judging the significance of this very fact its rejoicings would soon turn to wailings. The common people are awakening, they are moving forward, and those who would be leaders must lead in actuality or get out of the way. . . .

Space does not permit us to deal with these programs in this issue, but we invite criticism, particularly of the Left Wing Manifesto and Program. It is desired that Socialist Locals and Branches shall take this document under consideration and, if able to agree upon the basic principles enunciated therein, endorse it. Several Branches and Locals have already done so, though it is not offered as the final word but merely as a basis from which to work.

The *Revolutionary Age* will be glad to receive these endorsements until such time (within a few days) as other arrangements have been made.

"Freedom Only in Russia"

THE New York *Times* becoming very much annoyed at learning that "Russia is the only place where men and women can be free," delivers itself as follows:

When a man, speaking in an American city, excites the applause of numerous auditors by telling them that "Russia is the only place where men and women can be free," the fact raises a good many rather serious questions.

The first of them—Why did he make a statement at once so stupid and so false?—is easily answered. The speaker was James Larkin, who is himself as much of a Bolshevik as he can find time to be in the moments when he doesn't have to be a Sinn Féin and an exponent of what in this country is called the I. W. W. But this statement was made in Boston, and it is difficult to understand the existence there of more than a small handful of out-and-out lunatics that are desirous to have the only sort of freedom now existing in Russia. It is the freedom of a small class to kill and steal, and the freedom of everybody else to be murdered and robbed.

Of course Mr. Larkin would not put the case exactly that way but no other way suggested itself to him, so he abstained from what he knew or felt would be the dangers of definition. Mr. Larkin has been credited with ability of a kind and with moving eloquence. That is what makes him dangerous, but one observes that he prefers America to Russia as a place in which to do his preaching:

The first of them, it would seem to us, is not so easily answered from the point of view of the *Times* as that paper appears to think, especially if we look at the examples Larkin cited in support of his statement: that public meetings are continually being broken up by organized mobs, that men and women are frequently lynched for daring to disagree with official opinions, that returned soldiers and sailors are prevented from meeting for the purpose of organizing, that soldiers and sailors who have suffered in the trenches of the Western front are left penniless on the streets of New York. All the abuse that the *Times* can heap on Larkin does not change the facts of the case, the facts that America has imposed sentences, on men and women for expressing their political convictions, which far outdo Imperial Germany or Czarist Russia, that gangs of amateur spies have been turned loose on the country, that men on trial for political offenses have been hampered in obtaining the defense that even the bourgeois courts state is their right.

If the *Times* dared take these facts into consideration it could not dismiss the subject so easily nor would it find anything to wonder at that Larkin's speech was applauded by over 3,000 citizens of Boston. We would suggest that the *Times* ignore these things which it does not understand, that it pursue its policy of letting sleeping dogs lie, but in case our advice falls on deaf ears we would like to inform the *Times* that Larkin is a Socialist, was one of the founders of the industrial movement in Great Britain and is the leader of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, the largest industrial union in the world. It naturally follows that he is a Bolshevik, in as much as he is a part of the movement of which the Bolsheviks are the expression in Russia, it also follows that he is in sympathy with the I. W. W., which is the American expression of the industrial union movement, but in Ireland he is known as a Socialist and Labor man and is not affiliated with the Sinn Féin, which is a purely political movement. The Irish working class movement sympathizes with Ireland's demand for independence and is always found in the forefront of the fight, but whereas Sinn Féin aims at the establishment of an Irish Republic, the Irish Socialist and Labor movement aims at the establishment of a Workers Republic in Ireland.

48—54!

LAWRENCE, Massachusetts, is a typical New England mill town, a town of squalid poverty and business prosperity. Silhouetted against the evening sky it shows the grim outline of tall, unlovely factory buildings, accompanied by giant chimneys belching forth smoke, and the long monotonous lines of tenement buildings. A dirty station pitched in the midst of the confusion of a railroad freight yard greets the traveller. An irregular plot of brown lifeless grass opens into a street of business bustle, a street composed of new flashy buildings—the architecture of industrial riches—and gaudy stores, of unexpected vacant spaces covered with odds and ends of discarded building material and of tall irregular telegraph poles.

Stretching away from the common, a plot of grass and trees of some beauty, runs a long straggling street offshot with little streets lined with the hideously regular modern dwellings of the toilers in industry. Such is Lawrence, the scene of one of the bitterest industrial battles of recent years and always the scene of the grim never-ceasing class struggle. And her little streets, her wooden dwellings, her broken pavements, her grim factories, her lifeless grass plots are the scars of that struggle.

We had read in the Boston papers that the class struggle had again flared in open revolt, that the strikers were assaulting scabs, that disorder was so rife that the city fathers, always solicitous of the welfare of their children, had been forced to import police from surrounding towns, that mounted police were riding down the workers on the sidewalks of the city, that the foreign workers were holding up the town,

so we decided to visit our brethren and see for ourselves what was happening.

We arrived about noon and found in the main streets of the town people going about their usual business. Everything seemed peaceful and no outward signs told of anything unusual, except that we did observe an unusual number of police ostentatiously parading up and down.

Making our way to the headquarters of the strikers we found the Strike Committee engaged in deliberations presided over by Sam Bramhall, an old-time Socialist rebel of English extraction, a member of the Carpenters' Union. The hall was filled with men and women representing thirty-one nationalities, the delegates from different mills. Business was proceeding in an orderly and systematic manner as we entered. The doorkeeper, recognizing one of us, informed our comrade, Ime Kaplan, that Jim Larkin was in the hall.

A motion was immediately made that the regular order of business be suspended and that Larkin be asked to address the delegates. It was carried enthusiastically and Larkin stepped forward. He explained that being in the vicinity he felt it his duty to come amongst them and find out what the position was so that the outside world of labor might become acquainted with the details of the struggle, for, needless to say, the principle they were fighting for was accepted by the whole of the international labor movement, namely the right of the worker to dispose of his own life. He regretted that their imagination had not carried them as far in the field of practical demands as their fellow workers in other industries. "You should not only ask for a shorter working day" he said "but an increased wage and the right to participate in the management of the industry." He assured them that the eyes of the whole working class of America was centered on Lawrence, but that in saying this he did not mean to include the so-called labor leaders. He promised that their story should get the fullest publicity and the cooperation of the best minds of the American labor movement. He, with others, would place themselves unreservedly at their service.

The writer, when called upon, acting under instructions from the editorial board of *The Revolutionary Age*, placed the columns of this paper at their disposal and informed the Strike Committee that John Reed would, if necessary, attend to the publicity. P. F. Cosgrove, a member of the Marine Firemen's Union and an active New England Socialist told them that the keynote of their success was solidarity.

After the session closed we adjourned to the home of the secretary of the Strike Committee, Ime Kaplan. Kaplan, is a young man, a worker in the higher paid section of the Textile trade whose ability has been recognized by the Central Labor Union of Lawrence, which body engaged him to organize the present movement. He appeared to be a whole-souled enthusiast, yet with a practical grip of the details of the industry and possessing a personal knowledge of his fellow workers and their needs; and, as always follows with this type of man, a class conscious Socialist concerned not with his own interest but with the interests and uplift of his fellows. Of course the usual denunciations are being poured on his head. Assisting the Strike Committee in a legal way is Tom Connolly, a Socialist lawyer of Boston, a live wire by all appearances.

Thirty-five thousand men and women are already on strike, ninety per cent of the mills are closed and the remainder crippled. The workers are demanding a forty-eight hour week and the same pay as they received for fifty-four hours. Though the employers claim that they have granted since 1912, an eighty seven per cent increase on that standard the workers say that the cost of living has increased in the same period one hundred and thirty-two per cent. As one of the Strike Committee put it: "We are textile workers. What do we know of balance sheets and dividends? We know that we can barely pay our grocery