

A Soviet Republic for Britain!

Introduction

FELLOW workers of Britain, "The air of Europe is quivering with revolution!" And not alone the air, but the whole land-owning and capital class of this country are quivering with fear at the unforeseen results of the European War. Immediately following the armistice the Prime Minister proclaimed the speedy dissolution of the Government, hoping that in the psychological moment of victory (?) and the resulting disturbance to the public mind, the capitalist class would snatch another victory at the polls. Obtaining a new lease of power they would be enabled to re-establish their system of society on the old basis.

Accordingly they proclaim themselves to be reconstructionists, as if, forsooth, it was some extraneous force that has disrupted their society and not the conscious, deliberate actions of the capitalist ruling class of Europe who, arming their workers to the teeth, let war loose upon their unhappy countries in the struggle for markets for their products and wealth for themselves.

Fellow-workers, what is the society that Mr. Lloyd George and the Coalition Government wish to reconstruct?

It is the capitalist system, the society that produces strikes and lock-outs, unemployment and poverty.

One thing alone can save them and that is the willingness of the workers of Britain to replenish their exhausted coffers.

Fellow workers! shall we sweat and toil for these men—to replace their worn-out machinery and to build up for them their neglected industries?

If so, then within a brief period we shall glut the markets, trade will decline, and unemployment and a beggarly State pittance will be our reward, whilst our masters will be living luxuriously on the wealth we have created for them.

Mr. Lloyd George makes certain glowing proposals, because of "this quivering revolutionary air." His promises of high wages, shorter hours, and increased production are shrieking absurdities. During the war we worked long hours and increased production, and the capitalist class promptly blew our products to smithereens, and called for more.

Judge, then, between the proposals of the Industrial Socialists or Communists and the economic fallacies and plausible rhetoric of Mr. Lloyd George and the Coalition ruling class. On the one hand lies an opportunity for the workers of Britain to emancipate themselves from all the evils that now threaten them, and to form a society of free men and women living in their own land and enjoying the fruits of their industry in comfort and leisure.

On the other hand—capitalist employment and all that it means to the working class—social degradation, poverty, and economic servitude.

Choose, then, fellow workers, the choice is here and now.

State, Guild and Industrial Socialism

The Socialists of Britain have three schools of thought. The State, the Guild, and the Industrial Socialists. The State and Guild Socialists base their ideas on the economics of the capitalist system. The Industrial Socialists frame their future society on the economics of Karl Marx.

The State Socialists declare that the State must control industry, that the private employer shall be eliminated or given a maximum of profit, and that the workers shall be suitably clothed, fed, and sheltered.

The Guild Socialists divide society into three categories, the State, the Consumer, and the Guilds. The latter are subdivided into Guilds of Industries, deciding their own conditions of labour and wages, whilst the prices of their products are fixed by consultation and agreement between themselves, the State and the consumer, the State acting as a sort of referee or arbitrator. The whole machinery of production and distribution is leased to the Guilds by the State, and part of their profits provide for its upkeep and administration, the remainder belongs to the Guild producing them.

Both State and Guild Socialists are putting the new wine of Socialism into old capitalist bottles. They declare that under Socialism goods will be produced for the market for profit, and wages will be paid to the workers. Profit and wages mean capital, whether owned by State or Guild or private capitalist.

Both State and Guild Socialists assume a clashing of interests between consumer and producer. Their minds are still in the class ruled capitalist system, with its strikes and lock-outs and the haggling of the markets. What do they mean by the State? They mean that the direction of the whole economic problem shall

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be in the hands of an over-bearing class of State officials living on the workers' backs.

The State and its administration for the bureaucratic class; industrial labour for the working class. That is the finality of State and Guild Socialism.

Industrial Socialism or Communism

The Industrial Socialists or Communists declare that in order to emancipate themselves the working class must abolish the entire capitalist system of production, distribution and exchange. With it will disappear the capitalist State and the division of society into classes. The new society will be a Co-operative Commonwealth, wherein the land and the means of production and distribution will be controlled by, and on behalf of, the whole of the people by the democratic vote of all its adult members. The production of goods will be for their use-value for consumption, and their distribution on the basis of social and economic equality.

These are the objectives of the Co-operative Commonwealth: Within industry to increase production in order to give ample leisure to all its members for the enjoyment of life, and to further their intellectual development.

Each adult member of the Co-operative Commonwealth functions as a co-controller of its society and as a co-worker in its industries.

The control of the Co-operative Commonwealth is by the democratic vote of its adult members.

The Parliamentary vote is not a democratic franchise. As a capitalist institution Parliament is purely a law-making machine to keep the working class in subjection and to adapt capitalist society to any new environment—or situation—brought about by one development of the capitalist mode of production. The working-class electors by their votes hand over complete power to their masters who are also in possession of the means of production. Accordingly, within Parliament, the capitalist class adjusts and controls capitalist society in its own interests. At the same time by softening the economic hardships inflicted on the workers by what it terms reform legislation, the workers are deceived into the belief that Parliament, by its remedial legislation will relieve them ultimately of all the social evils that capitalism inflicts upon them. However essential Parliament is to the capitalist class, it is unnecessary in a society where all men and women are socially and economically equal. Within the Co-operative Commonwealth there is no class to dominate and exploit.

A democratic franchise is a vote by which every holder has a direct control over the whole social order of production, distribution, and administration. Within the Co-operative Commonwealth, in place of a central legislating body whose legislation is administered by local bodies, the whole social order must be decentralised and local councils elected. These councils, linked together, formulate their demands which are executed by a central body under their direct control. In other words the Co-operative Commonwealth is a Republic of Soviets or Communal Councils.

The Communes in Britain would comprise areas approximating to the Parliamentary constituencies.

Every adult member of 21 years possess the vote on a residential qualification.

Each Commune elects a Communal Council to deal with its wants. Also each Commune elects one of its members to a Communal District Council whose area of administration is determined by dividing Britain into ten Communal Districts.

The members of each Communal District elect two representatives to an Executive Council.

Each Commune elects a representative to the Communal Congress.

Accordingly by direct Communal vote there results:

About 800 Communal Councils.

Ten District Councils.

One Executive Council.

One Communal Congress.

The functions of these Councils are as follows:

The Communal Councils are concerned with distribution.

The District Councils with supply.

The Central Executive with centralised production and supply, and also functions as the Executive of the Communal will as expressed by the Communal Congress.

The Communal Congress decides upon all matters, relative to the united Communes, that is all questions concerning the social and industrial relations of the members of the Co-operative Commonwealth and their relations with the inhabitants of other territories.

The detailed work of these Councils is concerned

with the sub-divisions into which the life of the Commune is divided.

These sub-divisions are:—

(a) The ordered demand of the Communes to satisfy their wants.

(b) The methods of production and distribution.

The Communal Councils form Departments of Supply, Labour, Public Health and Sanitation.

The Department of Supply is concerned with the distribution of food, clothing, house accommodation, fuel, light, water, and all the products of industry necessary to the life of the Communes.

This department is sub-divided into its essential divisions.

The Department of Labour is concerned with the distribution of the labour available in each Commune.

The Department of Public Health and Sanitation concerns itself with all methods for the preservation of public health.

The District Councils form corresponding departments, and in addition form Departments of Roads, Transport, and Communication.

The Central Executive forms Central Departments for the Production and Supply of all essentials to Communal life. These Central Departments form the link between the Industries and the Communes.

The actual working of these Councils would be somewhat on these lines: The Communal Departments of Distribution would affect the details through the Communal Depots to the members of the Commune. The supply to the depots from the Communal warehouses would be by requisition to the corresponding Communal Departments. The latter would obtain their supplies through the Communal District Supply Departments who would tabulate and submit their requirements from time to time to the Central Supply Departments.

The Central Departments would also tabulate the immediate and future wants of the Communes, and give the necessary orders to the various Communal Industries for a supply of their products. They would also act as Supply Departments to distribute raw material and labour to the industries as required.

Just as the great armies of militarist Europe have been supplied with the essentials from the centralised control of the munitions of war through the various departments and sub-divisions of Army Supply and Transport, in order that each unit of the armies shall be supplied with food, clothing, arms, etc., so will the men, women, and children of the Communes be supplied from the Communal Industries through the Communal Departments of Supply and Distribution—only with this difference that they will be supplied according to their expressed wants and not according to the will of bureaucrats and army generals.

The Methods of Production and Distribution

The next step is to discuss the second sub-division.

(b) The methods of production and distribution upon the basis of economic equality.

Let us turn for a moment to the capitalist system of the production of commodities. Raw material enters the factory and is operated upon by the labour of the workers with the aid of machinery. The resulting product is sold either directly to the consumer or usually to a middleman who disposes of the goods through the usual trade channels. The price of the commodity is determined by the value of the average socially necessary labour embodied in its reproduction, but usually fluctuates above or below that value according to demand and supply. The owner of capital determines his profit by the difference between the cost of production of his commodity and the price realised by its sale. He determines his cost of production as follows:

Cost of raw materials and depreciation of machinery and rent and repair of factory and administration expenses and cost of distribution, i. e., carriage, advertisements, etc., and wages paid to workers.

The difference is his profit or the surplus value extracted from his workers. For in this cost of production no new values are created in the first five items. These values have already been created by other labour. Therefore the only source of his profit is the difference between the price realised for his product and the price paid to his producing workers for the hire of their labour power. He can increase his profit therefore by three methods: 1st by increasing the length of the working day; 2nd by a reduction in wages; 3rd by increasing the productivity of his workers.

Within the Co-operative Commonwealth the rent of land and the extraction of surplus value is abolished. But the Communal Industries must still produce surplus products over and above those essential to the needs of the producing workers. Therefore possible at this period in Capitalist Society to: