

# The Revolutionary Age

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## The Unemployed and the Soldiers

**T**HE problem of unemployment is very real and menacing to the American workers. It is a problem that will become more acute and that cannot be met in the old way. Drastic action is necessary.

Dr. George W. Kirchwey, Director of the United States Employment Service, said on April 19: "Recent estimates that placed the present number of unemployed in New York City at 40,000 are decidedly conservative. Actual statistics on unemployment are always impossible to get. One can only approximate. However, 100,000 would be much nearer the mark as an estimate of the number now out of work here. The total may be even higher than that." Approximately 25% of this huge army of unemployed in New York City consists of former soldiers, sailors and marines, according to Dr. Kirchwey, who adds that the present crisis will last well into the summer.

Recent estimates (which now must be revised upwards, however) indicated that unemployment is general throughout the industrial centres of the United States: Buffalo, 13,000; Albany, 4,000; the state of Massachusetts, 50,000; Cleveland, 55,000; Toledo, 10,000; Detroit, 30,000; Minneapolis, 4,000; San Francisco, 8,000; the state of Oregon, 7,000; etc. These figures provide a very poor picture of the actual menace of unemployment, of the terrible suffering of the workers which is made worse by a rising cost of living.

The actual unemployment is supplemented by a crisis among the employed. Wages are being slashed; workers are compelled to accept lower wages and work harder by the threat that the factory may close down. Workers with jobs are fired (often on the pretext of being Bolshevik agitators) while unemployed are hired at lower wages. A reign of industrial terror is being instituted by the employers.

There are two immediate causes for this unemployment (the fundamental cause, of course, is Capitalism, which develops and requires a reserve industrial army of unemployed): the suspension of most war industry work, and the demobilization of the soldiers and sailors.

During the war, the patriotic capitalists made money hand over fist. They monopolized, practically, the markets of the world, the European peoples being active producing death instead of goods. They manufactured munitions for the Allies, and then for the American Government, at fabulous profits: hundreds of new millionaires were made during the war. Some people do profit from war. . . . Extortionate prices were charged the Allies and the American Government for munitions, and other things; there was profiteering even in the food sold for the starving Belgians. . . . Extortionate prices were charged for necessities of life, for food, clothing and shelter; which largely cut down the slight increase in wages. It was a positively feverish period of prosperity—for the capitalists.

The workers during the war had power. Millions of them were drafted into the army; millions more were required in the war industries; there was a larger demand, also, for the commodities produced during peace. The result was that the demand for labor was larger than the supply. But labor was afraid to use this power, because of the regime of governmental and bourgeois terrorism made possible by the hysteria of the war: the capitalists could use war as an opportunity for larger profits, but the workers were largely afraid to use the opportunity. Still, the employers

were compelled to make concessions,—higher wages, bonuses, and "consideration."

"When the Devil is sick, the Devil a monk would be; when the Devil is well, the Devil a monk is he." When the capitalist needs the workers more than usual, he smiles upon them,—until the day comes when he can kick them again. . . .

The day came. The war was over (except the little war against the workers of Soviet Russia). Munitions

### Call for a National Conference of the Left Wing

**Local Boston, Socialist Party, Local Cleveland, Socialist Party, and the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party of New York City have issued a call for a National Left Wing Conference.**

**The call is issued to locals, branches and minority groups of the Party who have adopted the Left Wing Manifesto and Program.**

**The purpose of the Conference is to formulate a national declaration of Left Wing principles, form a national, unified expression of the Left Wing (a sort of General Council—not a separate organization) and concentrate our forces to conquer the Party for revolutionary Socialism.**

*The Conference will meet on Saturday, June 21. Representation—one delegate for each 500 members—not more than 3 delegates for each group. Place—to be decided.*

*Left Wing locals and branches, act! Address all communications to Louis C. Fraina 885 Washington Street, Boston, Mass.*

were not in demand. Unemployment developed—the first "victory" of peace for the workers, an indication of what is to come.

Brutally, the workers were thrown out. Brutally, the smile of the employers turned into a sneer: "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

Then this unemployment was increased by the demobilization of soldiers and sailors (and there are a million more, we believe, to be demobilized). Some of these "defenders of democracy" got their jobs—but this meant unemployment for other workers. Some of them couldn't get jobs—they had helped to make the world safe for democracy, but didn't make themselves safe for a living.

The American Government did practically nothing to insure a normal transition from war industry to peace industry. It threw workers out of the munition plants; it threw soldiers and sailors out of the service;—organizing no machinery to deal with the inevitable crisis.

Congress proved itself utterly incompetent, the employers utterly brutal. It is the nature of the beast of Capitalism. . . .

This unemployment crisis is bound to become worse—with all that means in the way of suffering and tears for the men, women and children of the working class.

More soldiers and sailors are to be demobilized. That means more unemployment.

But, still more important, European industry will soon resume "normal" operations. The United States,

at present, is still the only nation upon which the world can draw for commodities. But soon Europe will resume manufacturing. It will buy certain goods from us, but it will have goods of its own to sell; it will compete in the markets of the world with the United States. Out of this must develop acute competition, an industrial crisis, more unemployment.

It is a serious situation. It is a situation that calls upon the working class—employed and unemployed, for the employed may soon become unemployed—for aggressive action.

The soldiers and the unemployed must unite with the employed workers to act upon this crisis. They must create their own machinery to tackle the unemployment crisis.

They don't want charity. They don't want the smile of pretty girls or the unctuous promises of old women, in place of jobs. Nor must they depend upon "government agencies" which provide jobs for "experts" but few for the workers.

Councils of the Unemployed must be organized. Councils of Soldiers and Sailors must be organized. Councils of Workmen must be organized. These three have their own functions, but must unite in General Councils. And these Councils must consist of actual soldiers, sailors, unemployed and workmen in the shops.

The demands must consist, not in emergency measures, but in measures which are emergent and permanent in character. Hours of workers must be reduced in order to provide jobs for the unemployed, and make work easier and not a tragedy. Industry must be regulated to absorb the unemployed.

It is a crime that some workers work too hard while other workers have no work at all.

These Councils must prevent a reduction in wages; in fact, they should compel an increase in wages so that life may become worth living.

If factories shut down, while people are starving, these Councils must demand that the factories be operated by the Workmen's Councils. There shall be no sabotage of production while millions are in want of the things of life.

Mass pressure must be brought upon the employers and the Government. Mass demonstrations must be organized by the Unemployed Councils. The soldiers must assert their rights. Every Strike Committee must become a Soviet. There must be a unity of the soldiers and the workers: then we are invincible.

Gradually, these Councils from immediate measures will necessarily consider ultimate and larger measures. They must, if the workers are to live. From cutting profits, they will come to ending profits. . . .

Capitalism is breaking down. It cannot solve its own economic problems. It has come to a crisis; and this crisis will become more acute and menacing to the workers, until the workers act to end Capitalism.

The workers may not realize this now; but they will. Life itself will compel this recognition.

They told the soldiers they were to make the world safe for democracy: but the makers of democracy are now thrown upon the scrap-heap.

They told the workmen that a new world was coming; it has come, a world of new misery, of new oppression.

There must be action. There must be unity of the soldiers and the unemployed, unity of these with the workers; and a conscious struggle for work and life, peace and happiness