

May Day—and the Workers' Dead

MAY Day is the symbol of new life—of the germinal sap of Spring preparing to fructify in all the glory of the summer of joy and happiness.

There is a new life symbolized on Socialist May Day—the new life that is coming when the proletariat conquers Capitalism.

Our May Day is a day of life. But it is equally a day of death. The conscious rebel thinks on this day of the workers' dead—of the dead in the shops, mills and mines, of the dead in the social struggle against Capitalism. On more than one May Day have the armed forces of Capitalism meted out death to demonstrating workers.

On this May Day, the thought of our dead is emphatic and bitter, made so by our comrade-workers who are at this moment meeting death in Europe and Asia, death imposed by Capitalism in its fierce determination to retain supremacy.

In Russia, scores of thousands of our worker-comrades—men, women and children—have met death in the struggle against the exploiters, in the determination to make the world finer for those who are to come after them. They died in the struggle against Czarism, that putrid excrescence of centuries; they died in the struggle against the compromiser Kerensky and the compromising "Socialists;" they died in the great revolution of November 7, and after in the struggle against the counter-revolution; they died in the struggle against German Imperialism; and they died in the struggle against the invaders that Allied Imperialism sent into Russia. And they are dying today, in the struggle against counter-revolution organized and financed by the Allies; more, they are starving, a starvation deliberately imposed upon Soviet Russia by the brutal blockade of the Allies.

But the Russian workers and peasants, who have seen the light of the glory of the new society of communist labor and fraternity, are patiently enduring death and starvation, in the flaming resolve to assure the world revolution against Capitalism.

At this moment, our worker-comrades in Germany are dying in the streets, to overthrow Capitalism and affiliate with Soviet Russia. They, too, are starving; many have not yet seen the glory; but the Spartacans—"the Socialist conscience of the Revolution"—are determinedly waging the revolutionary struggle. In spite of death, and all!

In Bavaria and in Hungary, our worker-comrades are dying to assure the supremacy of the Soviet Republic.

Workers are meeting death in Italy, France, Great Britain, everywhere, in the preliminary action that will soon flare up in the final revolutionary struggle against Capitalism.

Death in the workers' cause is not death, but life. In agony and in tears, in the shadow of the Valley of Death, the proletariat struggles onward to a finer world of life and love and liberty.

Death is the maker of life. Death is not death when used in the service of life. Life is not life when used in the service of death.

Capitalism threw our worker-comrades into a reactionary war, to meet starvation, death and mangling. It used life in the service of death—the death-in-life that is Capitalism. It used life against life, death for death.

Our worker-comrades in Europe are using death against death, life for life. They know the price, and they are paying the price.

But there is a world to conquer! There is life and love and liberty to gain!

It is a flaming, glorious death, this death secured in the inspiring struggle against the exploiters. It is a death that uplifts, that assures life.

In this struggle, Capitalism is doing its last killing.

There is protest against making death in the great social struggle. But it is Capitalism that makes the

dead in the revolutionary struggle. And think of the dead that Capitalism makes in the piping days of peace.

In the days of peace, our worker-comrades meet death in the shops, mills and mines. They are mangled by the machines; they are killed by industrial diseases; they die from over-work and under-nourishment; they die by the scores of thousands from industrial accidents. Our worker-comrades in the mills, shops and mines die slowly and they die quickly; but they die. And their wives and their children die from too much work, from starvation, from that evil thing which is Capitalism.

These dead are dead in the service of Capitalism. They die to make profits for the capitalists, to assure the supremacy of Capitalism. It is a miserable, tragic death.

Capitalism is terror: Capitalism is death.

Not satisfied with the dead it makes in industry, Capitalism plunges the world into war and accelerates the process of killing the men and women of the proletariat.

There is revolt against Capitalism. And there is death. But it is the death glorious. It is a flaming death, not the tortured death of the slave who accepts his slavery.

On May Day, we think of our dead. Our souls flame out in joy and glory at the thought of our dead in the revolutionary struggle against Capitalism. Theirs is the death supreme. . . . We think of our other dead, who met death in industry and in the holes that are the homes of the poor. And our hearts droop in sorrow—momentarily; for our hearts on May Day cannot harbor sorrow, but determination and inspiration to end Capitalism that makes death necessary in order to attain life.

On this May Day, let us resolve to devote all to the revolutionary struggle of the international proletariat, to conquer finally that for which the workers' dead have died.

The Old Strike and the New

By Richard Hansen

THERE are two obvious reasons for the strike wave that is rising up from coast to coast all over the United States—two urgent problems that confront the working class of America and demand immediate solution, to prevent reduction in wages and to actually better conditions.

Any demands of the workers for something better, something worthwhile is considered dangerous, and consequently—scores of cities and towns of 100% patriots of yesterday turn "pro-German", "foreign" and "Bolshevik" to-day.

The capitalists are ready to trample their wage slaves in the gutter, they have mobilized all their forces and are using them with the sinister determination of clinging to their absolute control over the means of human existence, of maintaining their bloody supremacy. The publicity agencies flood the country with poisonous and disruptive lies, the military and the judiciary institutions work with regular martial savagery—in order to nip in the bud the struggle of the working class. The capitalist ridden so-called labor organizations, the old fashioned leaders and labor fakers furnish great services to the enemy class. These are most dangerous in their injury to the labor class.

No wonder that great confusion is manifested in the ranks of the brave fighters of the working class. Their minds are infested with the old ideas, they are overwhelmed by the capitalist lies and by the follies of the labor fakers, who instead of guiding and organizing strikes are interfering with and obstructing them.

The old philosophy is: that this is no time for striking, that business is slack, and that therefore the workers should wait until the next period of prosperity—and then strike, or rather beg for a job, for an increase in wages, if they are still slaves by that time.

Another opportunist puts it this way: "You are not organized, you cannot think of a strike. Get busy, make your shop 100 per cent. unionized, fill your treasury and then—then you will not need to strike—then you will get everything without striking."

That, in a nutshell, is the whole philosophy of the old-fashioned strike. There certainly is an appendix to it, namely: if "everything" could not be obtained by begging and bargaining—then go out, but be sure to beware of sympathetic strikes, of general walk-outs and of other such heresies. Just stay out, as you went, and consume the savings of your

union. When you are broke again, just walk back as if nothing had happened. And do not forget to fill the treasury of your union anew.

After this you can begin this merry-go-round over and over again until eternity.

The high phrases of democracy and of the American standard of living which should not be lowered are forgotten completely. The fakers are willing to let the hundreds of thousands—the millions—of working men die from hunger on the streets were they were thrown in midwinter and where their ranks are still growing. The fakers willing to submit to wage reductions while playing the shrewd game of arbitration—although being fully aware of the sterility of all the various Labor Boards of Arbitration and conciliation.

The unique and strongest weapon in the possession of working class—the strike, has been annulled by the old labor leaders. And it is being used to the detriment of the workers, for instance in the textile industry—The John Golden clique fomented unrest and "threatened" strikes in order to obtain 12 1-2 per cent reduction of the "royal" weekly wages of 13 1-2 dollars of the textile workers. Apparently these fakers are working under the direction of the Woolen Trust and the famous Arkwright Club.

The real magnificent strike—like the Seattle general strike—are denounced and damned by the Gompers gang although this strike was led by bona-fide bodies of the American Federation of Labor

To postpone strikes until "periods" of prosperity, until the bosses begin to look for men instead of being annoyed by job seekers is folly, because during the most normal and prosperous periods the labor market is just as crowded. The army of the unemployed is always there—to furnish scabs in addition to the organized scabbery of the Gompers gang.

To postpone strikes until the shops are 100 per cent organized and until the treasuries are full is another fairy tale. The work of organization has been conducted energetically for decades—and where are we at present? Have we organized 10 per cent. of the workers in America? Where are the remaining 90 per cent? How many centuries will be needed to bring them into unions? By that time all of us will have died of starvation and of vile working conditions. Besides—organization in itself is an empty word; it can be used for bad as well as good purposes. For

instance, wouldn't it be of tremendous beneficial for the cause of the workers of America if the Gompers ridden part of Labor Organization didn't exist at all?

Essential as it is, the conscious organization of labor can never embrace the whole class or even the majority of it. To think of it is Utopian. To wait for it and to postpone the struggle on that account is a criminal folly. The forces of capitalism are too powerful to permit such a union to spread peacefully and to absorb a considerable part of the working class.

The process of organization itself—of forming class conscious fighting unions—requires strikes. The best unions have been born during the storms of actual struggles.

Pull a strike wherever you can—if you want a good organization. Where the circumstances warrant, where there exists sentiment—pull a strike. Stir up the existing unrest to open flames if you want an organization.

Throw into the waste basket the old concept that a strike, once begun, must be continued for months! On the contrary—let them be brief, let them last just as long as is needed to furnish the strikers with some education in class struggle. Continuous meetings and daily leaflets on the situation are the most essential points of the program while the strike lasts. For men, who cannot spare a nickel a day for dues on account of low wages—even a week may appear a fairly long time. This education should make every man understand that in a strike, as in every war, retreats and attacks are used and both are necessary for victory. Every participant in case of war must be ready to retreat—that is go back into the shops like an organized army with the grim determination to come out again, to fall upon the enemy at any moment with new energy and better equipment. If such education is obtained if the eyes of the strikers are opened as much as that—then even a so-called lost strike is a magnificent victory.

This is not an idle theory, but a very practical suggestion—applied with great success under almost as bad political conditions as prevail at present here in America, namely—under the regime of the Czar Nicholas, the last of Russia.

The American workers are seething with unrest. They can't remain uninfluenced by the labor struggles glorious victories in different countries of Europe and other parts of the world. The economic conditions in America are over-ripe for revolution. Isolated strikes are bound to become more general, more conscious in their means and ends.