

"Criminal Syndicalism"

THE onward sweep of world revolution has not left this country unmoved. In spite of the A. F. of L. Convention, the failure of the Mooney events and the oft repeated warning that "this country is not Russia," the events that have been remoulding the old world have made a deep and lasting impression in America. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the attitude of the powers that be towards all forms of radicalism. The forces of "law and order" are suffering from a bad case of nerves. In the fury of fear they are rushing headlong towards that which they desire to avoid. "This country is not Russia" they cry, and set about making it as like the old Russia as possible, with the result that the tendency to make it like new Russia grows by leaps and bounds, among the working masses.

All over the country the legislatures are framing new laws, which are modelled on those of the Czar's regime. The "rulers" of America see the handwriting on the wall but they have "learnt nothing and forgotten nothing". They desire to avoid the fate of the European autocracies, and so they scan the statute books of the old autocracies and model new laws on those that contributed to the downfall of these autocrats, in the belief that they will save the new autocracy from the same fate.

One such measure which is enjoying great popularity with budding czars is the so-called Criminal Syndicalism Law. No one seems to know exactly what criminal syndicalism is, none of the laws attempt to define it, but it sounds pretty bad and so it is hoped it will pass unchallenged. The average worker in America knows little of syndicalism, as such. It is not practiced by his union, he does not expect that in the course of his struggles with the boss he will ever be called upon to invoke its aid, and when he hears about a law to punish it he is not interested. When he hears that the law is designed not against syndicalism but *criminal* syndicalism he begins to be somewhat in favor of it. That is what laws are for; to punish criminal acts, and criminal syndicalism is probably one of those European im-

portations, in which bombs, stilletos, Black Hand work, secret cellar conspiracies and deadly poisons play an important part.

In Massachusetts, Indiana, California and several other states the criminal syndicalism law is already in effect, while a Criminal Syndicalism Bill is pending in Congress. At the present time several arrests have been made under these state criminal syndicalism laws, and their true nature is being brought to light. From the facts in the case which is before the courts of California it is clear that anything that the industrial barons of this country do not like can be construed as criminal syndicalism. The absence of a definition of what criminal syndicalism really is, gives the law practically a universal scope. No overt act is necessary in order to bring one within the scope of this law and the written or spoken word becomes criminal syndicalism through the District Attorney's interpretation of what some unknown person or persons might think as a result of reading an article or listening to a speech.

The various state laws dealing with the subject differ somewhat in the wording but in effect they are practically the same. Under these laws anyone is guilty who advocates the changing of existing conditions by a general cessation of industry, by force, or by any method that stands a reasonable chance of success. It is not necessary that the guilty person should actually suggest the overthrow of the government or even desire its downfall, all that is required is that someone should think, as a result of hearing a speaker or reading an article, that it wouldn't be a bad thing if the government was overthrown. In effect the criminal syndicalism laws are a revival of all the old laws of suppression. To differ from the king is crime.

In the California case which is at present before the courts, Emanuel Levin is charged that he did "*wilfully and unlawfully and feloniously circulate and publicly display books, papers, pamphlets, documents and other printed matter... containing and carrying written and printed advocacy, teaching and advising*

crimina syndicalism." The criminal citation was a copy of *The One Big Union* but later in the case other papers and pamphlets were introduced. Along with Socialist, and I. W. W. papers—*The Revolutionary Age* and *The Rebel Worker*,—such revolutionary papers as *The Dial* and *The Nation* are cited while among the pamphlets are a reprint of a speech delivered in the English parliament by Philip Snowden. *Justice and Labor in the Mooney Case. The Old Order in Europe and the New Order in Russia*, by M. Phillips Price.

When the court was informed that the public libraries circulate books of even more radical tendency the police judge said that "all such books should be burned, these books were written before these times, and since the times are now changed, we must adapt ourselves to the new conditions."

This gives some idea of what is meant by criminal syndicalism and the case has aroused wide-spread interest among labor organizations. The workers are beginning to understand that criminal syndicalism, as interpreted by the courts, is aimed against them. That the idea of protecting the country from "bomb plotters" is simply a subterfuge and that the purpose of such laws is to prevent workers from learning anything that might be of disadvantage to their masters. And that any worker who takes an intelligent interest in the affairs of the world or of his own relation to society is guilty of criminal syndicalism and is liable to suffer a long term of imprisonment.

Labor is beginning to examine these laws and to wonder just when a strike is criminal syndicalism and when it is not. Faintly it is dawning on the worker that anything that tends to make life worth living for those who labor is against the law. The workers of Russia were well aware that the laws of the czar were designed against them, they knew that they had no part in their making and that the czar's will alone was law. So they rose up and swept the czar out of existence.

But "this country is not Russia". Here the workers make the laws and elect the government!

The N. E. C. Mobilizing Slanders

THE press service in behalf of the rump N. E. C. is a shameless fabric of outright lies, half-truths which are worse than lies, and degraded personal slander. The Oneal statement of June 30th is of this calibre.

Left Wing criticism of party actions and politics have been insistent and unrelenting, but they have been criticisms of party actions. Cheap personalities cannot answer these criticisms.

For instance there is much emphasis put on the fact that John Reed favored Woodrow Wilson in 1916 and now receives the high vote in the Socialist Party elections for International Delegates. When Comrade Reed came back from Russia and was but a few weeks in the party those who are most insistent about his former admiration for Woodrow Wilson were very anxious to run Comrade Reed as candidate for Congress. It was only after he showed by his public utterances and party activities that he was of the Left Wing that the New York politicians reminded themselves of Reed's former support of Wilson, which was known to them all the time. The point is that John Reed has learned a great

deal during the past three stirring years, with most exceptional opportunities for observation and intensive study. Where is the evidence that his critics of the Right Wing have learned anything out of the cataclysmic developments of these years?

What did Comrade Reed do to entice the party members to give him ten votes for each vote given to James Oneal? Perhaps the party membership is not quite so stupid as Oneal imagines; perhaps there was a large element of discriminating judgment as between these two individuals as representative of present-day Socialism in the United States. From every part of the country the results are very much the same, so the camouflage about election frauds does not help solve the riddle of the enormous vote for Reed and the meagre vote for Oneal. One might think this vote was at least a *hint* to Oneal, but there are some persons whose vanity cannot be punctured by the membership of the Socialist Party. They measure the intelligence of the party by its appreciation of themselves. If the members give Reed ten times as many votes as they give Oneal, it is a clear case of emo-

tional insanity (the Oneal explanation for everything which differs from his own absolute wisdom).

Again, Oneal refers to "that queer combination of phrases known as the Left Wing program." This is curious, indeed. At Chicago, during the recent N. E. C. deliberations, I heard Oneal carefully review the New York Left Wing program in order to demonstrate how near he came to accepting it in its entirety. He asked only for a few modifications, but his main point was that there was no legality or reason in such a program being adopted until Oneal and his associates were ready to dictate it to the membership. For a "queer combination of phrases" as an evasion of all principles, we need only refer to the N. E. C. "statement of principles" of May 29th, heretofore reviewed in *The Revolutionary Age*.

The Left Wing program seems to mean much to most of the members of the Socialist Party. But this is more evidence of brain storms, according to the Oneal analysis. Is there anybody in the United States who is

(Continued on Page 13)