

flood has risen to the throats of the ruling class; and in order to save their valuable lives, and their still more valuable property, they are lending a hand, to a lying and rotten compromise.

First there came, on April 8, the famous "Order" of the Kaiser to the Chancellor, proclaiming the abolition of the class suffrage laws—"after the return of our warriors"—and the reformation of the Prussian Landtag.

"After the tremendous War accomplishments of our whole people"—so we read in the most pregnant portion of the proclamation,—“there is no room in Prussia for a class election system.” The proposed bill will provide, moreover, for direct and secret parliamentary elections.

Those who are unfamiliar with German political history can hardly grasp the significance of this proclamation, for they do not know that a real reform of the Prussian electoral system is practically synonymous with political revolution in the greatest and most important German State, and therefore, in Germany. When we say that this proclamation is one of the most important political occurrences that the world war has produced, we are, in no wise exaggerating its importance. Only he who knows the strength and labor that has been expended in the last twenty-five years in the struggle against the three class shame of Germany, who knows how the question, again and again, has stood in the center of the whole Prussian and German political arena, can appreciate the pressure that must have been brought to bear, to accomplish this change of policy of the German rulers.

The struggle against the Prussian class election system for many decades has been going on, a system that is to-day the most reactionary in the whole civilized world.

The whole Prussian Junkerdom fought against the overthrow of Germany's shame with unparalleled fervor and intensity. Even on the twenty-ninth of March, 1917, the Chancellor most decidedly objected to a discussion of Prussian election reform, during the war, although the Government had, in principle, already declared in its favor. And now, on Easter Sunday, comes the proclamation, marking out the general lines for a new electoral system, and giving it form and content.

We need hardly emphasize that this change of front was not the result of a God-given inspiration. Nor was it gratitude "to his brave, able, and highly developed people" that led the Kaiser to assume this new role; the explanation lies deeper. The ruling class has realized, that it is impossible to hold the fortress of class suffrage, in view of the present conditions in Germany. They fear that the sparks of the Russian Revolution may fly from Petrograd to Berlin, may bury all Germany in its flames. In spite of "closed doors," the dullest of Germany's subjects must needs stumble over the obvious ludicrousness of the fact that the people of barbarous Russia possess democratic rights, while the Roman Empire of Germany still cowers under the whip of the Prussian Junker. Just as the Russian Revolution of 1905 was so strongly felt in Austria, that the government, in fear of a popular uprising, granted the general direct, and secret ballot, so the present Russian Revolution has brought in its wake the fall of the class election system in Prussia. The free, the civilized German people set out, when the war began, to overthrow Russian Asiatic barbarism in the East. To-day Berlin is painfully limping along behind the accomplishments of the men who fought behind the barricades in Petrograd.

The willingness of the German Government to relent in the important question of election reform proves that conditions in Germany leave much to be desired. Hunger is fermenting among the German people—and the rulers know it but too well. For a conference on the question of the national food supply recently heard from an official source that "the morals of the German people had suffered gravely." The government has chosen the lesser of two ends, and is trying to infuse new vigor into the "popular morale," by sacrificing a pint of blood, in order to save its life.

The following instruction that was sent to the food-commissions in April, 1917, presents a graphic picture of the suffering in Germany, and openly acknowledges the inability of the government to cope with it: "In accordance with the wishes of His Excellency Micheles, State Commissioner for public food distribution in Prussia, you are hereby called upon to communicate