

# The World Revolution and the Immediate Tasks before the Industrial Organizations of the British Workers.

By J. T. MURPHY.

A crisis unprecedented in the history of modern industry is upon us. The wheels of industry are steadily slowing down. Millions of workers are being thrown on to the streets to starve. Not a single capitalist government can see a way in which to deal with the situation. Each and everyone of them are trusting to luck and waiting for the economic forces to beat out a solution to the terrible tangle into which humanity is driven. "Victory" and its "Peace" are the most dismal failures history can record. The war got beyond the control of the nations. The consequences of the war are equally overwhelming.

The imperialists have shattered Western and Central Europe to fragments, competing groups, which are either victims or tools of the great powers. The economic unity so necessary to Europe and the world at large is, under the present circumstances, an impossibility. Imperialism rides rough-shod hither and thither, all to no avail. The mountains of debt do not dissolve, the markets do not expand, the workers of Russia refuse to be beaten, and within the contracted arena of capitalism the mad gambling of financiers contrasts with the rumbling of great multitudes of workers on the move towards the revolutionary struggle for power.

Afraid of this mighty army, and panic stricken with the prospect of losing their hold upon the world's resources, the governments of capitalism drop their masks, and in spite of all their democratic jargon make machine guns and terrorism their final arbiters. From every country under capitalism come appeals for aid, protests against oppression of the workers, news of the banning of trade unions, the persecution of revolutionists and the insistent aggressive application of the dictatorship of capital. The class war is in full swing, and any approach to the problems before us without a clear recognition of that fact is doomed to produce futile results. It is for us to recognize our position in this world-wide class war and take the measure of the tasks before us as the vanguard of the British Working Class movement.

Of the three great imperialist powers of the West—Great Britain, France, America—Great Britain has certainly a record unparalleled for hypocrisy and grab. With unctuous righteousness, she colonized and conquered for the good of the world. In the name of "liberty", law and order, she has robbed, plundered and murdered the peoples of Ireland, Egypt and India, brought under her domination the Middle East, the border States of Russia, and no greater enemy of the Workers' Revolution exists than she. We in Britain are at the centre of the counter-revolutionary forces making war upon the world revolution. Upon the working class of Britain, the most powerfully organized working class in the world, rests the tremendous responsibility of its preservation.

## World Trend Toward Revolution.

The external situation is such that we can safely say that the centre of the World Revolution (i.e., Russia) is secure. So great and magnificent has been the fight of the Russian workers and so keenly have the workers in the Western countries felt the significance of the struggle they were waging that today no capitalist government can raise a reliable army to march

against Russia. That the capitalist governments will not cease to make attempts to raise armies for that purpose I do not doubt. But, at the moment, the Russian workers are consolidating their position while the Western workers are moving steadily in the direction of Revolution. They have more powerful governments to overcome, greater forces of reaction with which to contend, more highly developed technical forces against them, and, consequently, a more tortuous path to travel towards the Revolution. Powerful as these forces against them may be, the inexorable economic forces of capitalism are weakening their power and driving the masses into ever more powerful combinations—first for defence, then defiance and conquest.

Struggles and protests, open conflicts with the "Whites" are enumerable throughout the capitalist countries. Distress is everywhere. The British Empire is being shaken as never before. War is being waged in Ireland. The millions of India are rousing themselves to action. The economic pull of the United States on Canada calls forth alarms and fears; the demand for separate representation of the Colonies in the League of Nations are all indications of the strain that is being put upon the Empire. And everywhere in the Colonies and dependencies, in friendly nations and unfriendly nations, in "Allied" countries and "enemy" countries, class alignments of forces are becoming clearly in the ascendant. International working class solidarity passes from the realm of utopia to practice. The masses rally toward Moscow. The reactionaries rally to Geneva. The one looks to the Communist International, the other to the League of Nations.

## The Workers Lineup.

These are the two extremes. We are in the period when the working masses are passing from one to the other. Large forces are already on either side. For long years the workers' organizations, especially the Trade Unions, have been under the domination of the ideas associated with the Labor policy of the League of Nations, the policy of adaptation to capitalism. The Second International fostered these notions. The Amsterdam International fostered and fosters these notions. The war destroyed the Second International and gave birth to the Third or Communist International which focussed and led the fight for the ideas associated with the workers' conquest of capitalism.

The transition proceeds apace. It is illustrated in the political parties by the tremendous rally to the Communist International and the attempt to constitute a fourth International. In Trade Unionism by the rally to the Red International of Trade and Industrial Unions, the close ally of the Communist International, and the re-establishment of the International Federation of Trade Unions at Amsterdam.

## Phases of British Movement.

In the face of this situation, we find that the British movement is still insular, almost unconscious of internationalism. Politically, it is dominated by a Laborism which is fabby and nationalistic. Its Communist Party is exceedingly small and undeveloped and inexperienced in revolutionary practice. Industrially, the workers' movement is characterized by powerful unions strongly centralized and dominated by a reformist policy. Indeed, the tendency

is for the Trade Union Congress and the British Labor Party to merge, so closely allied are the political aspirations and the bureaucracy of the two organizations.

The revolutionary elements within the Trade Unions—The Shop Stewards and Workers' Committees—are widely scattered, indefinite in their objective, with unformulated policies, and lacking in the practice of the adaption of revolutionary principles to immediate circumstances.

The failure of the Trade Union bureaucracy to act in the critical hours of our working class history brought the extra-union organizations in their various forms into existence. This was overwhelmingly the case during the war. Since that time, with the passing of those extreme circumstances, the bureaucracy has become stronger rather than weaker, making more and more necessary the development of means for combating their reactionary power and influence.

We are now beginning the third sphere of our development as revolutionary factors in the history of British Unionism. The first phase was that of propagandists of industrial unionism and amalgamation of the unions.

The second was characteristically the period of action, the attempt to adapt industrial-union principles to the immediate struggle, and to take on the direct responsibility for the conduct of the fight against the bosses and the State. In this fight we did not conduct the struggle so much against the officials, but rather ignored them and fought the employing class directly.

The conditions obtaining during the war period were particularly favorable to this kind of activity. The entrance to the third phase is marked by a complete change in the objective situation. The officials cannot now be ignored. They have to be fought. The employing class and its State machine have become more aggressive than ever, and instead of a shortage of labor we are faced with enormous unemployment. So great are the changes, and so many have been the new factors introduced into the situation that we must give them closer attention, in order to appreciate the various theses before the Conferences.

Up to well within the war period, the British working class movement, in spite of the class character, reflected the imperialism of its masters. Politically, it was not class conscious. It made considerable distinction between politics and unionism, turning its nose up contemptuously at politics and limiting the unions to affairs of wages, conditions, etc. This state of mind found its counterpart even in the revolutionary movement, being divided into industrialists and politicians. Even the Revolutionists belonging to a political party failed to make the party keep its membership from activities as industrial leaders. The role of the political party was never really grasped. The industrialists, disgusted with the sectional fight of the unions, were divided into amalgamationists and those who wished to destroy the unions and build new ones of new form and character.

Internationalism was phrase-mongering, very, very few in any part of the movement realising its importance, and less applying it as a basic principle for action. Consequently the war broke with a movement absolutely incapable of offering resistance. But the rapidity of the changes forced in every direction, immediately began the development of the movement in an unlooked-for manner.

For the first time in our history, unemployment was quickly swept away. Trade Union regulations and Trade Union officialism were made subordinate to the Government. The Imperialist war forced the political issues upon the unions, and cut from beneath their feet any further pretence of having nothing to do with politics.

## The Factory Committee Movement.

Amalgamation and centralization became a necessity. The State became supremely interested in every industrial dispute and proceeded to evolve great schemes for the prevention of disputes, schemes which indicated the growing futility of the Parliamentary system.

On the other hand, the sharpening of the struggle in various industries, the transfer of vast masses of workers from industry, the growth of a consciousness of power among large sections of workers, arising out of the shortage of labor, the surrender of trade union and labor officials to imperialism, thrust the issues into the factories, especially in the engineering industry which was of enormous importance to the prosecution of the war. This situation was seized by the revolutionary workers, who developed the spontaneous movements which arose in the factories. Thus they became the revolutionary vanguard.

The political parties, however, played a very minor part even then, and the prejudice against "politics"

was well marked. In spite of that, however, important political issues could not be avoided, although this movement in the factories never formulated its political principles, nor produced a program of action. It remained in the realm of generalities on the one hand, and depended upon immediate issues cropping up, of which there were many, to keep it a real movement. It augmented these by stressing industrial unionism, and developing the idea of control of industry by the workers.

The Revolution in Russia added to its enthusiasm, and it early identified itself with it without getting down to the task of how best it could render help. The declaration of the armistice again brought about sweeping changes. Unemployment swept like a tornado through the country, shattering all unofficial organization of the factories. The hold of the Government upon the officials relaxed, thus permitting the operation of the ordinary union machinery as outlets for grievances. Even with the trade recovery, which came for a short time, the situation did not resemble that of the war period.

The engineering industry lost its pre-eminence, and the miners and the railway workers now held the key position. Consequently, the recovery of the factory committee movement was very meagre. But the importance of the reform committees and the vigilance committees of the railway men as driving forces in their unions was enhanced, while the shop stewards and the revolutionary industrialists in the engineering industry were compelled to give more attention to the unions. While all these movements had much in common, there was no contact with each other, even the miners of the various reform committees of the coalfields having never succeeded in making a co-ordinated movement. Viewing the industrial movement as a whole, from the armistice to date, we have to observe:—

- (1) The rapid growth of centralization of the unions, increasing power of the bureaucracy;
- (2) Big amalgamation, with which the bureaucracy further enthroned themselves for long periods of office;
- (3) The popularization of the idea of the control of industry by the workers;
- (4) The passing of sectional strikes and the near approach of the class strike;
- (5) The emergence of the unions as definite weapons to be used for objectives. This has taken two directions—(a) the closer identity of the definitely reformist; (b) a challenge to the State arising out of the economic struggle, through the power of the unions as an opposing force, and the conscious threat of industrial strength to achieve a definite political aim such as Peace with Russia. (c) In these cases it was Revolution in essence.
- (6) The creation of new forms of organizations, such as the Council of Action on the stress of a political crisis, wherein the whole working class is aligned against the capitalist government.
- (7) The passing of parochialism and the definite entry of internationalism as a practical and urgent policy.

Throughout these developments two marked tendencies are apparent, one essentially reactionary, the other essentially revolutionary.

The amalgamations, the centralizations, of themselves good, were in the hands of leaders who are counter-revolutionists and are a veritable danger, assisting all kinds of twisting and traitorous deeds to the working class. In this country, they have assisted the reactionaries, increased their power, and turned the healthy demand for the control of industry by the workers, into a means for the provision of all kinds of specious schemes of joint control of industry by the capitalist state and the workers, nevertheless; the desires of the reactionary leaders by the very weight of organization produced political crisis wherein the existence of the capitalist State was threatened. Witness the miners and railwaymen's strikes.

## Must Break Power of Reactionary Leaders.

The control of the machine enabled and does enable the reactionaries to play a very important part in the hampering of the full development of such crises.

The three important crises—railway strike, miner's strike, and the threatened strike against war with revolutionary Russia—clearly indicate how history is producing, in spite of the reactionary leaders and what role they can play, even though new organizations come into being such as the Council of Action, so long as means are not created whereby the leadership of the masses can be taken away from them.

The Russian Revolution and the coming into being of the Communist International have proved the unions to be weapons of the revolutionary political struggle which must not be left in the hands of the reactionaries. This fact is emphasized by

# THE POWER OF TRUTH.

By JOS. POORE.

In bourgeois society all values, however varied, are measured by the yardstick known as money. Money, says our modern money changer, is power and power is always given by the Almighty to those who have sufficient courage to take it. In Europe there are kings who control vast territories by virtue of which they receive enormous amounts of money from the poor peasants and the latter in their ignorance put these robbers on an equality with Jehovah and call them "Lords".

In capitalist America, the form is somewhat changed but in essence, the same cruel robbery goes on. Here we have King Oil, King Coal etc. These Kings, who are interested in nothing but wealth have so permeated the people's minds thru their insidious and reptile capitalist press that money has become a shrine at which all the sophisticated pay daily homage. Professors prostitute their learning; Editors sell their "souls", the Church is ever ready to keep the slaves in subjection; and young women sell their bodies to the highest bidders—all in the holy name of money. With the development of the capitalist mode of production all these offensive symptoms of bourgeois society, enhanced a thousand fold, come to the surface in such rapid waves that the best "brains" of the master classes are unable to explain away the causes thereof.

The other day I felt quite ill and quite naturally I sauntered into the house of an M. D. When our clothes are out of shape we take them to the tailor for repairs, likewise the shoes, plumbing etc. There is always someone to mend the broken commodity. Hence when a person is not well he calls upon his doctor to "repair" him and get him into shape. But the human body is something more than a machine; it is a producer of surplus value, i. e. it (the human body) works twice as hard as nature intended in order that the boss might accumulate more profits.

Said I to the M. D., "Doctor, I am working in the labor movement and desire very much to remain in the city". The M. D. gazed on the ceiling, scrutinized me from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, tightened his brain, squeezed his forehead and replied in the tone of an army officer: "Young man, it doesn't pay." There you are! Even the highly educated, scientifically trained Doctor measures a human action in the terms of money. Does it pay? When ever this dollar and cent policy is pronounced to me there immediately comes before me the undying and eternal example of Karl Liebknecht, of Rosa Luxemburg, of Frank Little, of Spartacus the French Revolutionaries of 1793 and 1871, and the great sacrifices of the Russian Bolsheviks who, surrounded by a world of enemies fight on with such zeal and enthusiasm that even their enemies are scared stiff.

My silent answer to the Doctor and all those who measure values by the yardstick known as money is: IT DOES PAY!

Now I ask myself what the reason is—why it pays? Why are thousands of comrades ready to face all dangers, persecution, tortures and even death itself in order to achieve the triumph of our cause—world Communism? Even the most stupid of animals run from fire, escape from the whip and guard against all vultures which wish to harm them. Why also do young men in the prime of life deny themselves such conven-

the creation of the Red International of Trade and Industrial Unions.

With these dominating features before us, and faced with a world breakdown of capitalism, it is necessary that the unofficial work within and without the Unions shall be intensified. The situation demands that the unofficial movement shall define its policy and tactics to the dominant issues of the day. It shall deal with unemployment—with the questions centring round the control of industry—with the role of the Unions in the working-class Revolution—the question of dictatorship—and the relations of the rebel industrial movement to the Communist Party. In addition to this, it is necessary for the unofficial groups in the various industries to formulate a policy to be pursued in their particular industries with a view to unifying the forces of the workers and liberating them for action.

To give effect to this, a basis of unity will have to be found for the various rebel trade union groups and workers' committees operating in industry today, in order that the rebel worker will be able to swing his less class-conscious fellow-workers into action in this, the final struggle for the mastery of the world.

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