

# Reformism In Full Swing

By J. T. MURPHY

**EDITOR'S NOTE.**—Interest in the British labor movement is intensified by the setback given the Ramsay MacDonald labor government in parliament on Monday. In order to understand the British situation you must read these articles by J. T. Murphy, British Communist and trade unionist. They will appear in the DAILY WORKER during the remainder of this week. Today's installment is as follows:

### The 48-Hour Week.

The Government has practically committed itself to the ratification of the Washington Convention establishing a legal 48-hour week in industry. The term industry exempts in this case agriculture, transport by sea, and commerce, under which head comes large sections of the distributive trades. It is rather wide in its application of the 48-hour principle, taking an average over a period of three weeks and permits a nine-hour day for five days when there is a Saturday half holiday. The limit of hours worked may be exceeded in the following circumstances: 1—In case of accident, urgent work to be done to machinery and plant or force majeure. 2—In continuous processes carried on by succession of shifts subject to the condition that the working hours shall not exceed 56 in the week on the average. 3—where by regulation the government may allow (a) permanent exceptions in preparatory and complementary work necessarily done outside the limits laid down for the general working of an establishment and, (b) temporary exceptions "so that establishments may deal with exceptional cases of pressure of work." In the latter case the maximum of additional hours shall be fixed, and overtime at time and a quarter be a minimum rate."

### Compromise Terms.

These are typical English qualifications which only an Englishman who is past master at compromising could have drafted. The Washington hours convention was drawn up by a commission of which Tom Shaw, now Minister of Labor, was chairman, and Miss Bondfield was a member. Mr. George Barnes was at the time of the Washington Conference the British government's labor representative and received a special wire from Mr. Lloyd George to sign the Convention.

That it will go thru when Mr. Henderson presents it to Parliament as his first Bill is fairly certain. But the government is striving also for international ratification first to raise its prestige in the International Labor Movement and second as a means of struggle against foreign commercial competition. Only Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Greece, India and Roumania ratified the convention. Altho Germany, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Sweden passed eight-hour day legislation, much of it has vanished and Germany especially is seeking to bargain reparations for the ten-hour day. On the other hand of the membership of the Trades Union Congress 2 1/2 millions have the 47 hour week or less. These have been achieved thru trades union action and consequently so far as the big primary industries are concerned the ratification does not make any difference to their hours. But it will mean a lot if ratification can be used to stem the reaction in Europe. It would encourage the workers in Europe and that of course will help British commerce so far as advantages in competition are concerned. Accordingly Miss Bondfield's statement at Geneva can be taken as an indication that the British government will take the initiative in calling an international conference to secure simultaneous ratification. She said: "The British Government would endeavor to fulfil what it regarded as a duty in view of the statements made on its behalf at Washington, and would promote all practical means to secure simultaneous ratification of the convention by the various countries."

### Amelioration Offered.

That both the French and the Germans will use the reparations question as a means of fighting the Convention can be taken for certain. But in any case the British Government has nothing to lose even by independent ratification. It introduces no violent change here whilst it will act favorably towards them in Europe.

Now we can sum up the little bill of social amelioration which Labor Government will be able to present the workers and poorer sections of the population. Then we can turn to what it is giving the imperialists.

1. Recognition Soviet Russia.
2. Abolished the "gap" in Unemployed Insurance pay and other annoying features which had been the subject of much unemployed agitation.
3. To the artisans, it will tell of the Rent Control extension, the reduction of rents and the building of cheap houses.
4. To the farmers it will point to the advancement of loans and the extension of the Trades Facilities Act to their industry, the initiative in co-operative farming.
5. To the agricultural laborers it will point to the restoration of the Agricultural wages boards.
6. To the workers in industry it will point to the ratification of the Washington Convention, the legalizing of the 48-hour week, the alleviation of unemployment by replacements for the Navy, the success of the Courts of Inquiry.
7. To the unemployed on relief it

will recall the Poplar debate and the canceling of the Mond Order.

8. To the women it will point to the removal of certain taxes on food stuffs (yet to be announced in the budget), the proposal for widows' pensions and the extension of insurance to cover many other phases of social life, to their attacks on rents and housings possibly the extension of the purchase to women on same terms as men.

With its left hand it will hand out these things to the poorer classes to prove that its policy of gradualism is a working practical policy. With its right hand it will also make its free will offering in order to prove as Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Henderson declare "that they are not a class party, or that in any sense do they place one class before another, but are indeed really non-party serving the interests of the nation as a whole." So in this direction too Reformism is in full swing.

### The Empire.

The first statement Mr. MacDonald uttered as premier in relation to the Empire was one on India, where by he secured lavish praise from every capitalist rag in the country. It was a definite warning to the Swarajists of all shades that the British Government would stand no movement of India that thought it was going to get anything by unconstitutional action was mistaken. India would only get self government when the British Parliament permitted it. Later the Labor Lord Olivier made the statement to the effect that India will be administered until 1929 in the manner now in use. In 1929 a Commission of Inquiry will be set up to review the working of the present system of "semi self-government" and say whether what is called the experimental decade has proved that native India is ready for and capable of complete self government, or whether some further period of probation is necessary to make sure that the withdrawal of the British element of authority will not be followed by civil war or widespread anarchy. So the Tories are quite satisfied. When the Prime Minister trounced MacNeil a few days ago it was on his faithlessness to the tradition of "continuity in foreign affairs." That he is carrying this policy thru is evident on the question of Egypt too. The Government has again announced continuity and the Egyptian Nationalists are protesting vigorously. They declare this statement of MacDonald's only strengthens the policy of legalizing "the usurpation of Egyptian rights, inasmuch as the four reserved points grants to Great Britain all the essential powers and domination."

### Following Old Imperialist Policy.

In addition the capitalists have nothing to complain of in the way of grants in aid. The Government has agreed to continue the policy of the previous government in relation to the grants to the Sudan Government and have voted a further £3,500,000. This is for the purpose ostensibly at any rate, the development of irrigation and let it be observed according to the Colonial spokesman "which is now for all practical purposes in the hands of the Sudan Plantation syndicate. This syndicate shares the spoils between itself, the Government, and the planters."

And now for the colonies and more good business. The new Trades Facilities Bill which passed its second reading this week provides that the British government pay up to a maximum of three-quarters of the interest on any loan raised in this country or the Dominions within the Empire for the purpose of embarking upon an undertaking of public utility character. The payment is not to amount to more than £1,000,000 in any one year, and the limit which is placed upon payment is five years. The main purpose of this proposal emanating from the Imperial Conference is to stimulate orders for goods from this country and to help to some extent the unemployment from which we are now suffering."

The bosses have no grounds for complaint against Labor's service to the Empire. And now let us see them in action on

### Foreign Policy.

After the first steps in the direction of the Recognition of Soviet Russia, MacDonald set about what he calls an atmosphere under which peaceful negotiations could be conducted. And then continuity once more again. Whatever he may have said, whatever the Labor Party may have said about the revision of the Versailles treaty, the Labor Government has to say nothing about it. That in effect is the rebuke delivered to Henderson in the Burnley by-election this week for having ventured to speak party politics instead of remembering that he was a member of the Government of the Nation. Henderson said the treaty must be revised. MacDonald says whatever your private opinion may be the government has not declared for that and we must continue where the others left off. So the Labor in office is different to Labor out of office. And now Mr. Henderson has been elected he at once proceeds to make amends and declares, "I go not to serve a party but the Nation. Not to look after particular interests but everybody's interests." And there you are.

So please follow continuity. First the development of the League of Nations. Germany says MacDonald must come into the League and we hope Russia. This week the Reparations tax of 26 per cent on imported goods from Germany has been reduced to 5 per cent. On practically the same day as this decision is made a dispatch is sent to Poincare favorable to stronger military control over German armaments and pointing to a League of Nations control. On the same day in an interview to the Daily News MacDonald projects not only the League of Nations control over the military resources of Germany, but also the Internationalization of the Rhineland under League of Nations control. With regard to Reparations he awaits the Report of the Financial Inquiry with a view to drawing America more closely into the arrangements contemplated in order to secure help against France with regard to payment of debt. It will be a case of Britain and America advancing the credits to Germany with the Thomas Railways and other industrials as securities and a struggle with France as to how much she is going to get out of the business. To combat France's military development and to take away the scare which France has always put up concerning military aggression MacDonald proposes the Internationalizing of the Rhineland. To get reparations he proposes the granting of the loan by British and American finance and to get the payments of Debts from France he proposes to jointly work the oracle with the American Government in the final arrangements as to the disbursements arising from German recovery. The League of Nations is to be the cover for the business because as MacDonald says, "it will be much more comfortable even to Germany to feel that she is under the supervision of a collectivity of which she is a part than to be the special victim of some particular nation's control."

To sum up. Instead of a revision of the Treaty of Versailles the Labor Government is going to develop it. Instead of being an instrument for the ending of Imperialism she is going to pull off what Lloyd George was unable to do. She will make a partnership with America to colonize Germany by the same methods that have already been adopted for the colonization of Austria and Hungary. When this account is presented to the capitalists of Britain as the prize for giving the Labor bureaucracy the spoils of office they will have no grounds for complaint.

Reformism is indeed in full swing.

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