

IS ORGANIZED INDUSTRY SELF-DESTROYING

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THE answer to those frequent Labor strikes which are disrupting industry, and are virtually mere struggles for domination by tyrannical and irresponsible groups, is that Trade-Unionism is on the way out.

In its day and generation the Trade-Union served a noble and useful purpose. It stood for justice, fair play and the protection of the weak. In its fight to raise the standard of living for the working man it strengthened the whole economic structure. History will gratefully record such illustrious names as Thomas, MacDonald, Clynes, Gompers, Green and Hillman. These men will share the fame of the Fords, the Rockerfellows and Edisons of the capitalist classes, in that they had all made great contributions to human improvement. The work that they have done, the fame that they have so justly won, will always endure.

But these men were, and of necessity, fighters. A Union Victory, obtained by coercion through the strike, meant essentially shorter hours and more pay. A further "victory" meant still shorter hours and more pay. A yet further "victory"—another increase in wages, further shortening of working hours. Clearly there had to be a limit. It could not eventually come to all pay and no work. A too "victorious" Union led logically to the destruction of Capitalism and the defeat of its own ends. As Hillman, who had successfully led the garment workers out of depths of human misery, put it tersely when he refused to let his Union press for further concessions: "Destroy your boss, and you destroy your job."

In the Golden Age of Trade-Unionism which is now past, enlightened public opinion and the aroused public conscience stood solidly behind the Trades-Union in its fight for economic justice. This was especially true of England, whose great labor leaders were men of integrity and vision, who had risen from the ranks. They won the sympathy and support of fair-minded people in all walks of life, and their warmest supporters were members of the English Upper Class who possess to an unusual degree the Anglo-Saxon instinct for justice, liberty and fair play. I am not qualified to discuss the present attitude in England toward the working class. In England labor is a political party quite different from labor as an economic group

such as we have it here in Canada and the United States of America.

Without fear of contradiction, I assert that the tide of public opinion has definitely turned, and that enlightened public opinion is now strongly antagonistic to organized labor. Such organizations no longer serve any useful purpose in the economic structure. They throw sand in the bearings of industry. They are a hindrance to social progress. Their day is done.

Of what economic value is the "slow down", the system of tyrannically forcing a worker to "go slow", to be inefficient, to do only forty minutes work in the hour for which he receives sixty minutes pay? What do you think of a system that would force an honest worker against his convictions to join a Union, or else would keep him from getting a job? And what about a system that would compel a manager against his will, by means of the "check-off" and "maintenance of membership", to maintain a "strong" Union that is primarily an instrument of coercion to be used against himself? What do you think of a Union that would tie up essential War work in order to compel a manager to collect its dues? Does the public care about the "legality" or "illegality" of such a strike? Not a thing! What weight have "recommendations" of any "Conciliation Board", against the standing monument to the inefficiency and lack of ethics of labor in every ill-built-low-value-at-high-cost home! And what is presumably behind this insistence on the "check-off" and "maintenance of membership?" Is it dislike and distrust of the Union by Union members themselves in whom there may be the awakening of some sort of social conscience, some sense of social responsibility, the feeling that the best interests of labor and of society at large are not to be achieved by driving management to the wall or by the restriction of output, the conviction that a man is happier when he is free to work efficiently and without regimentation? And are such members to be "forced" to remain in the Union?

I remember being at Dearborne in the spring of 1937 on the day when the Ford Company's Union or, rather, Anti-Union troubles began. While waiting for my little roadster to come off the Assembly Line, I was shown with great pride through the huge Rouge plant that had had its humble beginnings in a small bicycle shop. Lofty concrete buildings covered over a thousand acres of land; 80,000 people were happily at work. In a huge parking space for the employees I saw 20,000 cars.

The whole plant had the immaculate cleanliness of a hospital ward, 5,000 people were at work all day long to keep it so. Every little detail effecting the health and welfare of the workers seemed to have been considered, down to the last item in the menus of the appetizing hot lunches served in the restaurants and cafeterias. Here was the great modern miracle of what can be achieved by efficient management and loyal co-operation of labor—the highest paid workers in the world, turning out the lowest priced cars.

Outside the gates, though I didn't at the time know it, waited the organizers of the Labor-Union with their bundles of leaflets telling the Ford Company employees that the poverty and oppression from which (quite unknown to themselves), they were suffering, was due to the autocratic rule of a company "run for the benefit of a few stock holders", as the C.C.F. would say. Its remedy was to join the Union and "protect" themselves from Ford "exploitation". For days these men with their bundles of leaflets had been trying to get inside the plant. On this day they ventured on what the Ford Co. claimed as "their" territory and, at the instance of the manager, Harry Bennett, were thrown off the premises as trespassers by the guards. Their unwelcome visit had resulted in bruises and broken bones.

That night after dinner, sitting in the lounge of the Hotel Statler in Detroit, I heard the loud angry voices of some Ford employees that I knew discussing the incident. "Trying to get into our plant with their rotten little leaflets were they? Trying to organize us were they? Didn't we know that in our plant we had higher pay and better living conditions than in any other plant in America? Didn't we know what the Union was after? Why, twenty-five cents a week from 80,000 people to be put into the funds of their Union and used God knows how! Good for our Harry Bennett! That was the way to handle them! What was a week in hospital for those Union guys anyway! Well, suppose they did bring an action for assault and battery against our Company! We'd keep throwing those Union guys out as fast as they got in all the same."

You know the rest of the story. The Union did bring an action for assault and battery against the Ford Motor Co. and "our Harry Bennett" and, this being a free country, the Ford Co. was forced to let the Union come in and collect their twenty-five cents per member. You may remember, too, how shrewd

old Henry Ford handled the situation, and managed to prevent the Union from doing more than could be avoided to demoralize his employees.

In these cases of a deadlock between capital and labor, why is labor so insistent that the Government shall interfere on its behalf? Surely it is the part of the Government to make laws and not to settle petty squabbles! When it has made laws its responsibility ceases. What is behind the idea that the Government should be asked to "take over"? Well, as an employer the Government is considered an easy mark of unlimited wealth. We know the type of person who puts corruption into politics; "Naturally if I vote for you, I expect you to do something for me when you get up to Ottawa—to "use your influence" to exert "pull"—to "get something"—for the man who hasn't enough ability to get something for himself.

The average man thinks about government not that it is an institution to further the ends of democracy, but that it is a political pork barrel with an unlimited supply of pork. "Government" time can be wasted—"Government" goods can be stolen: the tires on "Government" cars can be worn smooth in exceeding the speed limit on the highways. "Government" will tolerate an unlimited amount of waste and inefficiency. You can force a private company into bankruptcy but never the Government! Does it matter if a government-managed enterprise is in the red! Not at all. There is a gold mine in the sky to take care of all deficits. Nothing has to be made to pay! And, then of course, you can threaten and bully Government, "Give me what I want, or I'll see you don't get back into power". Have we to save our high wages and prevent inflation? Not at all. We will answer the Government's attempts to enforce thrift with absenteeism. Perhaps the clergy and teachers in our midst, who are advocating Government Ownership of big business as a *sine qua non* of prosperity might reflect that the chief reason why such a scheme would be sure to fail, is their own failure to preach and teach patriotism, that is that the first duty to our country is to do an honest day's work in its behalf.

Well now, what is done to make the wheels of our economic system run smoothly? Is it to give the Trade Unionist more power—to give him an equality with management, as Mr. Bracken the leader of the Progressive Conservative party suggests? What happens when you put an irresponsible bully interested only in extorting concession for labor on a managing

board, giving him equal power with his boss? Economic strife of the worst sort, and Capitalism driven to the wall. Well—try the C.C.F. idea. First destroy the Capitalist System, then hand over the reins of Government to the Common Man, letting him “take over the financial resources of the country”; “control” the big corporation and be boss of both the business world and the Government even though he is clearly unqualified to fulfil either task.

Is there a third way? Yes. Let us begin by throwing out this scrapper, this bully, this warring element in our economic system. “Surely, you won’t leave the helpless laborer without the benefit of collective bargaining! Surely he won’t have to deal individually with management!” No, I would leave no laboring man whose untrained mind and unskilled hands make him of very little economic value at the mercy of a highly intelligent, economically powerful man whom he has antagonized. Our Anglo-Saxon instincts for fair play would never allow this. The less a man’s capacity for intelligent thinking, the more likely he is to accept the C.C.F. propaganda—that his poverty is the result of somebody else’s prosperity or the failure of the MacKenzie King’s Government to “look after him”. A man inspired by the “Seize the Wealth” idea is a political menace. Not once or twice has the civilization slowly built up by the Superior Man been overthrown by the Common Man through sheer brute force of numbers. Ballots in the hands of ignorance are as great a menace to Democracy as bullets in the machine guns of armed forces crowding in on us from without.

Then what do you suggest? What has been tried before and found to work? Well, let the worker, through his democratically chosen representatives, voted on by secret ballot, meet with management and decide on what constitutes an honest day’s work—working not at high pressure—which is destructive—but slowly and steadily, and for such work assign a minimum wage based on what the company can afford to pay him and yet make a reasonable profit. For the profits in the increase in production gained by working above this minimum, let him have a fifty-fifty share with management. This plan was recently tried in the Vickers plant in Montreal. Efficiency jumped from 60% to over 100% in most departments and the extra profits to be thus divided were over \$6,000,000.

Will firms where there are successful profit-sharing systems ever have strikes or labor troubles? They will not. Look at

the strongest and best of the companies. *American Tel. and Tel.* is one with which I am most familiar through direct contact with the employees. Here the employees are encouraged to buy stock in their own company. The more efficiently they work the larger their dividends. The men that I knew personally enjoyed liberal pay, had short hours and generous holidays. During long periods of sickness they were looked after by the company, *not* by the Government.

In short, what the Nova Scotian worker needs is a New Deal—to work under a plan where his pay is raised as his efficiency increases. Do you think the workman wants to be nothing better than a cog in the wheel—a mere drudge with no future? Not at all. He wants to get out of life what the capitalist does. That is the satisfaction that comes to a man after a day of honest and efficient work—to be able at the close of the day to say what the skilled doctor, the brilliant lawyer, the successful business man does: "I've done a hard day's work and enjoyed it. Next week I'll work better, and get more pay for it."

To offer a man mere "security" from the cradle to the grave, isn't good enough. To offer to feed, clothe and lodge him at the Government's expense, isn't good enough. To offer him mere work, isn't good enough. All these things do the prisoners serving life sentences in the penitentiaries have. Also in the penitentiary they "work for the state", "for the good of the many rather than for the profit of the few" as the C.C.F. literature from the Pentagon Building puts it. But very little happiness is found among the well fed, properly housed and well clothed wards of the Government in Dorchester. Also very little work gets done there under the motive of "Service rather than Profits", so I've been told.

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In short, I think that Trades Unionism is on the way out. The day of Victory for Labor, through the weapon of the Strike is, I hope over. After all, David the Man of Battles was not allowed to build the Temple. The choice of the Lord fell on Solomon, the Man of Wisdom. Let us hope this era will usher in the choice of the Man of Wisdom—the man of conciliation, compromise and co-operation who working in harmony with management will build up the Tabernacle of our economic life, and that it will be a strong and beautiful edifice—a fitting monument to the Spirit of Peace.