

THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT

For International Socialism.

Vol. V.—No. 22

SATURDAY, AUGUST 24th, 1918

Price Twopence.

'BUS GIRLS STRIKE FOR EQUAL PAY.

Although we missed our appointments we were glad to walk when we realised that the women bus and tram conductors were striking to secure the observance of the important principle of equal pay for men and women.

The question has arisen on the refusal of the Committee on Production to allow the 5s. weekly war bonus—which has recently been awarded to the men to be extended to the women also. The women are determined to get that bonus because of the far-reaching principle involved. Said one of them with a buoyant determination: "We shall not give in even if it means a month's holiday; we women are going to stand strong to the last and will not go back till they tell us we've got that 5s. We were engaged on the promise that we should get equal pay and we will have it."

The men say that the work the women conductors are doing is harder than that of the men conductors before the war because, as every one is unpleasantly aware, the reduction in the number of vehicles has led to veritable fighting by crowds of would-be passengers who are pressed by those behind against the barring arm of the conductress, stretched out, either to secure a passage way for those who are dismounting, or to signify that the bus is full. Many inconsiderate men and women try to force their way in in spite of her, and when at last the bus starts she has five people standing inside where the pre-war conductor had none.

In the spring when all the workers demanded a bonus the Committee on Production awarded £1

a week to the men and to those women who were engaged on the definite understanding that their pay was to be the same as the men's. The London conductresses got the £1 bonus, but in the provinces many did not and some got as little as 4s. Yet surely the equal pay understanding applied to all the women as when they were first engaged on the trams and buses the men only agreed to work with them on condition that there should be equal pay for men and women. In July, when another claim was made for an increase, the workers demanded complete equality with the men for all the women, but the Committee on Production refused to assent.

Therefore the women have taken the matter into their own hands. The movement began at a private meeting of the women at Willesden Garage on Friday, August 16th, where it was decided to strike immediately, without waiting either for trade union officials or employers. The Willesden women conductors solidly refused to work on Saturday morning; they were followed by Acton and Hackney—soon the strike had spread all over London. Some of the women on the trams also struck.

The trade unions concerned are the London and Provincial Vehicle Workers' Union, to which most of the bus workers belong, and the Amalgamated Association of Tramway and Vehicle Workers, of which the main proportion of L.C.C. tram workers are members. Mr. Robert Williams of the Transport Workers' Federation (to which

both the L.P.V.W.U. and the A.A.T.V.W. are affiliated), urged the women to return to work pending negotiations, and notices calling attention to this were posted in the L.C.C. depots. The majority of the tramway workers remained at work. Mr. Ben Smith and the Executive of the Vehicle Workers' Union, at a meeting on Saturday night endorsed the action of the strikers, so large a proportion of whom belonged to their union. At a Blackfriars mass meeting on Sunday Mr. Smith moved a resolution urging an extension of the strike to the provinces. He asked the meeting to consider this very seriously as it meant "throwing arbitration overboard," but in the audience of 2,000 no hand was raised against the resolution. Mr. Beal, London District Council N.U.R., said that when 128,000 miners on strike were put under the Munitions Act they refused even to consider returning to work till they were withdrawn from under the Act. He said that in a fortnight the women railway workers would be striking for the same reason.

Many of the Tube girls who belong to the N.U.R. have struck in sympathy with the bus girls. The tramway workers displayed less spirit, though some conductresses soon came out. The trams are under the control of the L.C.C. and various local councils. Under the latter the war bonus varies from 9s. to 16s.

The women conductors are fighting a big fight with splendid spirit. Good luck to them!

AUSTRALIAN LABOUR ON PEACE TERMS.

The situation in Australia since the anti-conscription vote has been one of rapidly increasing tension between the Labour Party and the Nationalist (= Liberals x Labour seceders) Government. The consequent anti-war tendency of the Labour Party has now come to a head with the decision of the Inter-State Labour Conference, at Perth on June 25th last, not to participate any further in recruiting unless the Allies declare their immediate readiness to enter into peace negotiations on a basis of no annexations and no penal indemnities.

The process leading up to this decision may be traced from the Conference convened by the Governor-General in April to consider the question of recruiting. This Conference represented the Labour and Nationalist Parties from each State the Employers' Federations and the Industrial Labour Movement. The Labour delegates took the opportunity to bring forward matters which they declared to be prejudicial to recruiting, viz. victimisation of strikers, de-registration of the Unions that took part in the strike, the attempt to force men to enlist by economic pressure, the heavy penalties imposed upon political offenders, especially in connection with the last conscription campaign, the abuse of the censorship, and the failure to make adequate provision for returned soldiers. As a result the Government and employers promised to rectify those matters—re-employ strikers, re-register the Unions, put a stop to economic conscription, &c. Finally, the following resolution was passed:—

"That this conference, meeting at a time of unparalleled urgency, resolves to make all possible efforts to avert defeat at the hands of German militarism, and urges the people of Australia to unite in a whole-hearted effort to secure the necessary reinforcements under the voluntary system."

While the various Nationalist Governments, represented by the Premiers, were bound by this resolution and the promises made, the Labour representatives, having no definite mandate, had to refer the matter to the various bodies that they represented, and here the centre of interest passes to these Labour bodies. One section, headed by Mr. Morby, the President of the Sydney Trades Council held that the Conference had resulted in a bargain, and that in order to secure the re-registration of Unions, &c., the Trade Union Movement, as such, must begin a whole-hearted recruiting campaign. Hence Mr. Morby, after he had presented his report on May 17th, moved the motion carried at the Conference. There was most violent opposition from the strong body of class-conscious unionists known as the Industrial section, who are responsible for the scheme of Industrial Unionism which is at present being officially considered by the Australian Labour Movement. This section now commands a majority on the Sydney Trades Council, but has not yet captured the executive. Their leader, Mr. Judd, moved a long counter-resolution declaring the war to be

capitalist in origin and in aim, citing the Secret Treaties, the German peace offers, the Lansdowne letters, &c., and concluding:—

"Therefore, whilst fully expecting anti-Labour forces to misrepresent and calumniate our action, we refuse to take part in any recruiting campaign and call upon the workers of this and all other belligerent countries to urge their respective Governments to secure immediately an armistice on all fronts and initiate negotiations for peace."

After a protracted controversy and three adjournments, during which a violent press campaign was carried on against the "secessionists and disloyalists," this resolution was finally carried by the Sydney Trades Council by a majority of 104 to 75. Thereon the press went nearly mad and set out to promote a split in the Council. A much advertised meeting of the Conservatives was held to consider the formation of a separate council. Not one fifth of the Unions, however, affiliated to the present Council are joining the new body, and these only small conservative craft unions of little importance with the possible exception of the Electrical Trades. (This is the split which *The Times* has reported.)

On June 1st the State Labour Party (New South Wales) met and considered in camera a series of drastic resolutions on peace, asserting that the war was being prolonged for imperialist and capitalist ends, demanding an immediate armistice for discussion of peace terms, and affirming that the white races were being exterminated, and that, in view of the sparse population of Australia, it was undesirable that further men should leave the country. These resolutions were after long debate carried amid enthusiasm, and sent along as recommendations to the Inter-State Conference.

The Inter-State Conference at Perth, which concluded on June 25th, passed the following resolution on the subject of the war:—

"The attitude of Labour towards the publicly declared objects of the war is what it was at the outbreak of the war: (a) For liberty, democracy and the independence of small nations; (b) for honouring publicly made treaties; and (c) for the maintenance of public and international law.

"The aims of Labour in participating in the war purposed: (a) assistance to Britain under the voluntary system, maintaining the publicly declared objects for which she entered the war, and those only to the best of our capability, consistent with Australia's paramount essential needs; (b) bringing about an enduring world peace on terms of equity and justice to all mankind.

"Further participation in recruiting shall be subject to the following conditions: (a) a clear authoritative statement to be made on behalf of the Allies, asserting readiness to enter into peace negotiations upon the basis of no annexations, no penal indemnities; (b) that Australia's requirements in man-power be ascertained, and met in respect to home defence and industrial requirements. Immediate inquiry, upon which the Australian Labour Party shall be adequately and officially represented, to be held, and its decisions given immediate effect.

"Provided this determination shall be immediately submitted by each State executive under the direction of the Federal Executive, with a recommendation from the conference for adoption, to a referendum of the members of all branches and affiliated organisations, and shall become operative upon a majority of votes being cast in the affirmative, the ballot to close not later than November 1st. In the event of the ballot being interfered with by the Federal Government, the decision is to become operative at once."

THE CZECHO-SLOVAKS.

In the *Isvestia* of May 30th appears a statement by Trotsky explaining that for some months previously the Czecho-Slovak troops had been endeavouring to leave Russian territory. The Soviet Government had taken all necessary measures to facilitate their departure by Vladivostok, but had made it conditional on the surrender of all arms save a small number of rifles per company for patrol service. With the assent of the Local Soviets the Czecho-Slovak troops were moving eastward when the Japanese landing at Vladivostok and Semenov's bands made it impossible for the troops to proceed and the Soviet Government decided that they should wait until arrangements could be made for them to sail via Archangel. Meanwhile counter-revolutionaries, with the Socialist Revolutionaries of the right as prime movers, were agitating amongst the Czecho-Slovaks and pretending that the Soviet Government had dark designs against them. Some of the Czecho-Slovak officers, numbers of whom were Russians, were connected with the counter-revolutionaries. The condition of surrendering arms had not been honestly complied with and the agitation led the Czecho-Slovaks to use them against the Soviets. The Peoples Commissariat for War then issued a statement expressing sympathy with the Czecho-Slovak workers and peasants, but declaring that the seizure of military stations and other acts of violence (as happened in Novo-Nikolaievsk) could not be tolerated, ordering, therefore, that the Czecho-Slovaks be immediately disarmed, but promising that steps would be taken to enable them to leave Russia with the least possible delay.

RUSSIAN PROTEST.

The Russian Socialists Groups in London at their General Meeting on August 3rd placed on record their disapproval of intervention, in view of the following:—

"(1) That the Russian Revolution is threatened from the enemy from within as well as from without. (2) That all the strength of the Russian proletariat is needed for the organisation and creation of the new order after the demolition of the old regime. (3) That at this particular moment any steps taken against the Soviet Government, no matter from what side, serve only the counter-revolution and interfere with the creative work of the Soviets.

"We protest most emphatically against any interference of foreign Governments in the internal affairs of the Russian Soviet Republic and against all attempts on their part to start a new war against the Soviets, which represent and defend the interests of the majority of the Russian people. We hope that English democracy will come to our aid in time and will not allow international imperialism to crush the first Socialist Revolution in the world...."

WORKERS' SOCIALIST FEDERATION.

LONDON MEETINGS. OUT DOOR. FRIDAY, AUGUST 23rd. Rathbone Street, Canning Town.—11.30 A.M. Miss Price.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 30th. Morrish Street, Bethnal Green.—11.30 A.M., Miss Price. SATURDAY, AUGUST 31st. Great Push in Hammersmith.

WORKSHOP NOTES: By W. F. WATSON.

THE IRON HEEL.

Although it has been publicly announced that the Embargo on skilled men is suspended, men leaving their jobs for better conditions find that various reasons are being given by the firms for not engaging them after promising a job.

The Daily News of August 7th says that: "By an Army Order issued last night a soldier released from military duty for civil employment shall not be entitled to Army pay or allowances, notwithstanding that he has not been discharged or transferred to the Army Reserve."

LONDON WORKERS' COMMITTEE.

At the second Newbold Lecture both the Speaker and Chairman, Cedar Paul, were in great form, and the audience was deeply interested. It is proposed to run Lectures throughout the winter, some on Thursdays, some Saturdays.

A MOVE TOWARDS CO-ORDINATION.

On Friday, August 16th, a mass meeting of shop stewards was held at Holborn Hall to hear the final report of Rook v. Holbourn case. W. F. Watson reported on the strike and inquiry. It was decided to issue a report in pamphlet form to sell at 2d.

The pending women's strike was discussed, and it was decided to reconvene the Shop Committees to give the women every possible support. Similarly with the Embargo. It was recognised that the only way effectively to combat the attempts to force Industrial Conscription upon us is by and through the Shops Committees.

MISCELLANEOUS ADVERTISEMENTS

FAMILY LIMITATION DOCTRINE. Post free, 14d. Malthusian League, 45, Broadway, Westminster.

WOMEN WORKERS should spend their holidays at "Sea View," Victoria Road, Brighton.—Hostess, Miss Turner.

ANTIQUES.

For Genuine Old English Furniture and China. MARY CASEY, 29b Lincoln's Inn Fields, W.C.2.

Greer's Agreeable BAKING, CUSTARD, EGG AND BLANCMANGE POWDERS

In 14d. Packets. Obtainable from all grocers, wholesalers only from D. W. GREER & CO., London, S.E.5

INTERNATIONAL YOUNG AGE PENSIONS.

Dear Friends of Humanity.—In order to relieve the terrible poverty and suffering that is devastating Europe, let us endeavour to place the children and all those who are helpless in comparative safety by securing SEVEN SHILLINGS A WEEK each for them from the State.

PIGEON CHEST, SPINAL CURVATURE, KNOCK-KNEES, AND FLAT-FOOT CURED BY EXERCISE TREATMENT.

WORKERS' SOCIALIST FEDERATION. REMEMBER THE DATE!

YOU are cordially invited to our RUSSIAN "AT HOME," on Sunday Afternoon, SEPTEMBER 8th, at 4 p.m., in the Hall, 400 Old Ford, Road, E.3.

WOOLWICH TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL. WOOLWICH LABOUR PARTY. ROYAL ARSENAL SHOP STEWARDS' COMMITTEE.

Great Labour free speech and free press Demonstration. Will be held on PLUMSTEAD COMMON

On Saturday, August 31st, 6 p.m. Speakers, J. Ramsay Macdonald M.P., Jack Sheppard, Chair, J. E. Mills.

"DREADNOUGHT" ON SALE

At Mrs. CARFORD'S, 183, WEST STREET, SHEFFIELD. Wholesale and Retail.

B. S. P. (Central London). Every Tuesday, 8 p.m., from September 3rd, at East-West Club (Minerva), 144, High Holborn. Subject for September 3rd, "IT," by Eden Paul. Admission Free.

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THE EMBARGO. By J. T. Murphy.

An open letter to Skilled Workers. BROTHERS.—The extension of the "embargo" is suspended pending an inquiry. What "the inquiry" is going to effect I do not know; but we ought to proceed with an inquiry of our own.

WHY WAS THE ORDER POSTED? Strange to relate, the Order was communicated to the workers. Had this not been done a crisis might not have developed at all. The workers would have gone to another firm, as they usually do when an employer ceases to want them, and it would have been some considerable time ere they discovered the move to be deliberate.

At first glance this generous disclosure of an Order for the direction of the commodity, labour through the channels of the labour market would appear to be one of those unique events which illustrate the "mutuality of interest" of employers and employees; but there is a fly in the ointment for, our Coventry comrades inform us that they were told by their capitalist "brothers" in industry: "This is your funeral, not ours."

WHEN LABOUR IS SCARCE WAGES NATURALLY RISE, BUT EMBARGO PREVENTS WAGES RISING. Now let us turn to the embargo. First of all it prevents the raising of wages through what is known as the normal action of the market. When labour is scarce, wages rise, and the effect of the shortage of 60,000 to 70,000 skilled men would naturally have been to induce employers who urgently wanted men to offer better terms in order to attract men from other employers.

ONLY THE MINIMUM IS GUARANTEED. There is a guarantee that district rates shall be paid; hence it is asserted that wages are not lowered. This is very plausible, but the day-rate is the minimum which is guaranteed, and the existence of piece-work and bonus systems, &c., provides great scope for variations in earnings. The firms which offer the best conditions are usually well supplied. Thus the embargo coerces men into shops indirectly, without the corresponding return which the open market would have

brought to them under the stress of the shortage of labour. Again, the "mutuality of interest" advantage breaks down and the employers reap the benefit of the interference.

WHO FIRST USED POISONED GAS?

The German press has asserted that the idea of using poison gas originated with the British Admiral Dundonald. The British Ministry of Information replied:—

"that Dundonald, who was born in 1775 and died in 1860, and was an expert chemist as well as a great sailor, warned the British Government in the early part of the nineteenth century that it was technically possible to produce an asphyxiating gas which could be employed in military operations. Its employment by the British Government was never seriously considered, such a method of warfare being condemned as too inhuman. The fact that the Hague Convention of 1864, to which Germany was a party, expressly forbade the use of asphyxiating gas is sufficient evidence that the possibilities of gas as a weapon of offence were known to all the War Offices."

A German wireless message of the 17th inst. maintained that poison gases were first used on March 1st, 1915, by the British and French, whilst the first German attack with poison gas took place on April 24th, 1915. The British Ministry of Information's reply was:—

"The first portion of this statement is, of course, a deliberate falsehood, for which there is not the slightest vestige of justification."

Those who are short of labour get their labour, and those who have their supply possess the weapon of coercion over their workmen. In the latter case it works as follows: "Well, if you are not satisfied you know you are at liberty to leave."

EMPLOYERS WHO ARE SHORT OF LABOUR GET LABOUR; THOSE WHO HAVE LABOUR GET THE MEANS TO COERCE IT.

The language is clear, the tone may be pleasant, the twinkle in the employer's eye may be merry, and the position of the worker appears cheerful. Actually, however, the worker has to choose between a worse employer and the Army. In these glorious days of "patriotism" even the man with a grievance grins and prefers to "endure the ills he has, &c."

EMBARGO AND LEAVING CERTIFICATES BOTH MEAN INDUSTRIAL CONSCRIPTION.

Extended far enough this coercion is undoubtedly a kind of Industrial Conscription. We sampled one kind of industrial conscription when the "leaving certificate" was in vogue. The difference between the leaving certificate scheme and the embargo scheme is as follows: The leaving certificate scheme was of a passive character and the embargo scheme is of an active character.

LEAVING CERTIFICATES CHECK, EMBARGO AFFECTS MOBILITY OF LABOUR.

The first was introduced and enforced to check the mobility of labour, its tendency to move in search of better jobs. The embargo is introduced to affect the mobility of labour, to coerce it into moving in the direction desired by the employing class.

LEAVING CERTIFICATES IMMEDIATE, EMBARGO GRADUAL IN EFFECT. The first was made general at once. The second is more indirect and will be fully achieved only after a considerable time. Nevertheless the coercion is there and of a very contemptible kind.

HUMAN BEINGS TREATED AS COMMODITIES.

The trouble arises because human beings are treated as commodities. On no previous occasion have the workers had their commodity status thrust so insultingly in their faces. "We have ragged butter, meat, sugar, and other commodities, therefore we must ration labour." The men were, and are, anxious to be treated as commodities in an open market with a shortage of labour, but are not prepared to be so treated when the commodities require controlling. We can't have it both ways.

STRIKERS AND FIGHTERS.

This confusion is no new thing. It is because we of the working class are human commodities that this confusion exists. It explains the difference in the attitude of the employing class

Continued on back page.

towards us when we apply for an advance in wages, and when we are going to win a war. In the first instance, our wages are our prices as commodities, and the employer does not like the price of his commodities to rise any more than we like the price of bread to go up. Hence when we strike, the employers view us as the "unruly mob," the "ignorant crowd led by youthful agitators."

APPROVAL OF THE WAR IMPLIES RESPONSIBILITY TO PROSECUTE IT.

There is a war on now and the workers of this country acquiesce in its prosecution. Such agreement implies responsibility, and when the governing body responsible for the conduct of the war makes certain demands upon them, they are faced with certain courses of action. They have either (a) to prove that the reasons advanced in support of the demands are not tenable; (b) to repudiate the prosecution of the war and accept responsibility for such a course; (c) to assent to the Government's demands; (d) to promise an alternative scheme for effecting the objects of the Government. No one has attempted to show that there is not a shortage of 60,000 to 70,000 skilled men and a need for more efficient distribution; nor have the workers adopted the other three courses. So we are in the midst of contradictions, an acceptance of the war policy and a refusal of responsibility. We have observed that a number of obnoxious consequences are involved in the embargo; but they do not justify an attitude of all round negation. So long as the human tragedy continues such an attitude is contemptible.

THE WAR V THE TRADE

But we are told the engineers are concerned for the future of their trade. So the issue changes to the war versus the trade. Let us face this issue squarely. The engineers along with the rest of the working class have acquiesced in the war and the existence of the War Cabinet to conduct it. That body has declared the war to be primary, the trade secondary. The workers have not objected. The engineers have agreed and acquiesced in the dilution of their trade by agreement. They have agreed to youths up to 23 years of age being taken for the army, all for the prosecution of the war. These are deadly facts to meet now with the plea of trade interests. So long as the war continues with the agreement of the workers the problems which arise will have to be accepted with all their consequences. That fact can never be forgotten.

THE CONTINUANCE OF THE WAR MEANS THE DEPRECIATION OF THE TRADE.

The only way in which this immediate problem can be solved is by the efficient distribution of the skilled labour which exists and the extension of dilution. The consequences are not to be forgotten either. They are the further depreciation of the trade and the possibility of a further withdrawal of skilled labour for the Army.

Continued on back page.

was left upon Mr. Turpin's own hands. Parts were made in different factories, and were then put together by him elsewhere. The finished article was handed to the French War Office almost on the eve of war. Attempts have been made by German agents to discover the inventor's secret. It is believed that France will only make general use of turpinites in the last resort. It is affirmed, however, that its deadly powers have been tested experimentally against the Germans on one or two occasions. The moral of all this appears to be that atrocities are a feature of warfare; that war itself is the great atrocity, and that to go on fighting to punish the other side for its atrocities is hypocritical, wicked, and absurd.

THE COAL RATION.

The coal ration is unfair to the poor. If a single family occupies a twelve-roomed house it probably only requires two, or, at most, three fires at one time; yet it is entitled to 11 tons of coal per annum. A family of the same number of persons crowded into three rooms gets only 34 tons a year. It is expressly stated that furnished bedrooms which are only occasionally occupied count as rooms!

GIVE THIS PAPER TO A FRIEND