

PROFITEERING AND LABOR STRIKES

The following editorial from the Topeka Capital, a daily newspaper with no special interest in the labor movement, is so liberal toward organized labor and contains so much good, sound reasoning that it is considered worthy of reproduction:

"Labor is being recklessly attacked because of its selfishness during war times exhibited in strikes, especially upon government work, as in the shipbuilding industry of the Pacific coast. But yesterday the facts were disclosed which throw a significant light on the subject. What happened was the offer of a 33 per cent wage advance by one of the shipbuilding concerns to get workers from other plants. When competing concerns failed to make a corresponding advance many workmen struck.

"Nobody will deny that labor is selfish, but it is another thing to accuse it of lack of loyalty and love of country. Is there an industry in the United States that has not been boosted without cause or reason, other than the belief of the business man that he could get the price? If so, let it be named. A monument representing patriotism should be built then to the business man who has refused to take advantage of any opportunity to make every dollar of profit attainable. When Kansas City's street car strike occurred the other day it was learned that the company was paying its men only 22½ cents an hour.

"Business is selfish, and so is labor, which is a part of business. If any distinction is to be made at all it is not, as is so frequently encountered, distinction against the laboring element and abuse of labor because it goes after the dollar. The distinction should be the other way, because what labor can hope for is no more than a comfortable living wage, while what business goes after is excess profits beyond the wildest dreams of avarice. To denounce labor while ignoring the profiteering which perfectly represents capital and business ethics, is merely to show innate American prejudice in favor of the dollar and against the man, with wife and child.

"If labor is not to be specially blamed, neither is business. Business exists for profit, and that is the whole story. Business has been brought up on profit-making as the only excuse for its existence. The whole secret of business and meaning of it lie in profits. In the time of war thousands of business men have a feeling that they would like to make some sacrifice for the country, but they do not know how to do it in prices. That is not business. And there is no way of conducting business yet known that is not the business way.

"These things being self-evident, the less said about labor's unpatriotism in seeking profits, or higher wages necessary for a decent living, the better."

JOHNSON ON WAR PROFITS

Following final passage in the senate of the two billion dollar war revenue bill Senator Hiram W. Johnson made public a statement in which he said:

I voted for the revenue bill because it was the only revenue bill presented, and the money to be derived from this bill is absolutely essential for the prosecution of the war.

Our contest in the senate was not without results. The revenue from war profits under our assault was raised a half billion, and the table taxes—those upon tea, coffee, sugar, cocoa, and the like—were stricken from the bill. The bill, nevertheless, in my opinion, does not raise sufficient revenue and is entirely too tender of war profits. It represents,

however, money for the war, and the money it raised, because of the war, had to be granted.

The advocates of great war profits and very limited taxes from those war profits have won a victory but it is a Pyrrhic victory. They ever touched the same chord and sang the same refrain. They loudly declaimed that they believed in high taxes of war profits at the proper time but the proper time was some uncertain and indefinite future, presumably after the war, when there could be no more war profits.

Lugubriously they asserted that if a large percentage of profits were taken by the government industry would be crippled and business throttled. A few concrete examples of war profits will demonstrate the fallacy of the arguments of the timid war profits tax men.

The Bethlehem Steel Corporation made average pre-war peace profits of four million dollars, and in 1916, made war profits of fifty-seven million dollars; the Dupont Powder company made average pre-war peace profits of five million dollars, and in 1916 made war profits of eighty-two million dollars; the Anaconda Copper Mining company made average pre-war peace profits of eleven millions and war profits in 1916 of fifty millions; the Utah Copper company made pre-war peace profits of seven millions and war profits in 1916 of thirty-nine millions; the United States Steel Corporation made pre-war peace profits of sixty-three millions, and it is estimated in 1917 will make five hundred and eighty millions.

In the last case the government leaves untouched to the United States Steel Corporation more than three hundred millions of dollars of war profits, in reality almost one million dollars a day, and in other cases cited, proportionately, the senate has been as generous. Of course, all of the expenses of the war cannot be paid from current incomes; but where we can lessen the burden of the future, without injury to the present, we insist it should be done.

Every dollar we now incur must some time be paid. Every dollar we now pay means one dollar less we must pay in the future. Every dollar we refuse to take today when we are able to take it from these enormous war profits, is an added dollar we and our children must hereafter pay.

When we now refuse to take, as England with its 80 per cent tax now takes, a just proportion of these enormous war profits, we say to those who go across the sea: "Not only must you fight the battles of the republic upon a foreign soil, but if you return you must pay a greater proportion of the cost than you ought to pay because we did not have the courage, or because we were lacking in something else in dealing with the profits that were made out of the struggle in which you risked your lives."

We say as well, to the small taxpayer, the merchant and the farmer: "You in the end must foot a greater part of this bill than you should have paid, and that which we could have paid today from the steel corporations, the copper companies and the others now profiting from the war, in our tenderness and timidity we put upon you."

The generosity and the charity of the Congress to the Dupont Powder Company in permitting it to retain so great a proportion of its 1,600 per cent profit, to the Utah Copper company in yielding it so great a part of its 500 per cent war profits, to the Anaconda Copper company with its 500 per cent war profits, to the Bethlehem Steel company with its 1,400 per cent war profits, and to the United States Steel Corporation in permitting it to retain almost a mil-

HOOVER GETS OFF TO A WRONG START

Mr. Hoover, our genial food controller, hasn't really got on the job yet—at least, there are no falling prices to show it—but he is trying to climb slowly and painfully toward that elusive creature, "the man higher up," and put the screws on him. He has got as far as the person known to us as "the wholesaler," and has decreed that prices of food stuffs shall be regulated by the prices the wholesalers actually pay. That is to say, the retailer, the small exploiter, the last small link in the profit-snatching chain between producer and consumer, will be the first to be "regulated." That is to say, again, that the curtailment of profit shall begin with him.

It is a beginning at any rate, and perhaps it may work indifferently in some cases. In others, it is more likely to be the beginning of Mr. Hoover's real troubles.

Let us take milk for instance. The wholesaler, the farmer tells us, pays him but 7 cents a quart for it; he retails it—or, as he calls it, distributes it—at from 12 to 15 cents a quart. Now Mr. Hoover's fiat would, if effective, cut down the profits of the milk trust. Farmers selling potatoes to the "wholesaler" get, let us say, \$1 a bushel for them; the wholesaler gets twice that from the retailer. Now if the price the wholesaler pays for them is to fix the standard of price for the retailer, it is apparent that we might expect a reduction in the price of potatoes. And so with other commodities that need no manufacture but are produced ready for consumption.

But how will it be with sugar, for example? The trust allows the wholesaler little profit there. And if the price of sugar is fixed on this policy by Mr. Hoover, we may expect no reduction in the price of sugar, but on the other hand we may expect a rise. The same is evidently true of beef, mutton, pork, oils, cooking fats, rice, breakfast cereals, canned goods, preserved fruits, etc. How will Mr. Hoover figure out from what the beef trust pays for the raw material that it works up and puts on the market as a finished product? How will he figure the cost of manufacture when the "wholesaler" himself is the manufacturer? If all commodities passed regularly through the hands of wholesalers and jobbers, who were not the manufacturers of the product, and each of these took his regular profit, Mr. Hoover's task would be much easier. But most industry has passed out of that stage long ago. The trusts beat the United States government. What have they to fear from Mr. Hoover, even with the government back of him?

In other words, where the "wholesaler" is really an agent instead of an independent profiteer—as is the condition in scores of industries—there is no reason for expecting any reduction of prices through the Hoover scheme. How, for example, is coal to be cheapened? If it is to be done at all, Mr. Hoover must go back of the wholesaler, to the "pit's mouth"—to the coal mine owner; and after that comes the railroads and other means of transportation that brings the coal to the place where the consumers reach it. And how will this scheme apply to Rockefeller's oil? These things are just as necessary as food stuffs.

The Hoover scheme, as it stands, will not do. It does not lion dollars a day war profits, and to the others making enormous gains out of our struggle, must all be paid some day when there are no longer war profits, and the reckoning will then be with the ordinary taxpayers of the nation.—Trinidad Free Press.

go back far enough. It must go back to the point of production and figure from the actual labor cost of the commodity right through. Nothing can be done by hitting the chain in the middle; by starting with the wholesaler. The Hoover plan might work better if we were still in the old era of "free competition." As it is now, it will not work. So far as it does work at all, it will give the trusts the greatest profits, and at the expense of their competitors. 'Twas always thus; and thus it always will be until we get back to the actual production of the commodity. That is the place to begin. And it is vain to look for a general reduction of prices by beginning anywhere else along the profit chain that stretches from production to consumption.

Mr. Hoover is an excellent man; an efficient man, but he cannot be expected to work miracles; and if he is so expected, he will disappoint us. But in giving us a lesson in how not to do it, he may be instructing us in the real and only method possible by which it can be done, though at this stage we, of course, do not expect him to say that the job can only be put through by the application of Socialist principles. He will leave us to find that out, and as we starve in the meantime, there is much hope that our half-empty stomachs will prove better teachers than our at-present-addled brains.—(N. Y. Call.)

BUNK PATRIOTS

(By Berton Braley.)

I prefer the slacker to the bunk patriot.

For at least the slacker is frankly dodging his duty, while the bunk patriot is trying to get by with loud promise and no performance.

Who is the bunk patriot? He is the corner grocer who drapes the flag all over the front of his shop and puts up his prices 50 per cent "on account of the war"; the restaurant keeper who serves Hoover's war rations at enhanced schedules; the business man who subscribes to two Liberty bonds and gets it back immediately with 200 per cent added from the public he is supposed to serve; the landlord who sends out notices of increased rents on paper with an embossed flag in the corner.

He is the employer who talks about the "disloyal and unpatriotic workman" that strikes for another dollar a day to meet increased living cost due to the activities of other bunk patriots and in the next breath denounces the confiscatory and socialistic policy of taking ten per cent of his extra war profits to carry on the war.

He is the banker, the financier, the money lender who cheers for our boys in khaki and forecloses notes and mortgages on the families they have left behind.

He is any and every member of the tribe of "I'll get mine"—and when the real patriots who are suffering and sacrificing and toiling and fighting to win this war for democracy and decency find time to attend to him he's going to "get his" with compound interest and a bonus. When that glad period arrives the rest of us will be present to look on approvingly and to yell—"Hit him again, he has no friends!"

"PROFITEERS"

The patriotism of young American girls and boys is being exploited by the makers of army and navy uniforms, an investigation now being conducted by the war department discloses. The Tribune says. The federal investigators found children are working on these uniforms, some of them boys in Boy Scout uniforms, and some of them as young as 12 years of age.

In one small New Jersey town not far from this city the investigators found that about 40 per cent of the 800 employes work-

ing on uniforms were children and young women.

This clothing manufacturer, like many others, found himself with a strike on his hands when he got the government contract. He denounced the strikers as un-American and appealed to the patriotism of the countryside. His appeal met with a hearty response. Schoolboys, many of them in the uniform of Boy Scouts, and their sisters made application for work, saying that they wanted to do their bit. In this man's factory a boy of 14 was put to work on a cutting machine and received \$6 a week. (The man who had the job before the strike was called made from \$28 to 30 a week.) Incidentally, the boy had his wrist cut by the machine, several inches of flesh being torn out last week, after he had been doing his bit for the better part of a month.

A boy 11 years of age, wearing knee pants, was put to work as a cleaner in the same shop. He was paid by the piece. According to the information now at the disposal of the secretary of war, this boy earned \$1.25 for a week's work.—Issues and Events.

LUNATICS ORGANIZE? NO. ATTENDANTS? YES

In connection with the newly organized union of attendants at the state hospital the following anecdote, taken from an exchange, is decidedly pertinent:

A visitor was being shown over a lunatic asylum. "Do you ever have any bother with the patients?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; sometimes one of them will get troublesome."

"What would you do if the whole lot got troublesome at once—if they organized a revolt?"

The warden smiled. "We haven't any fear of that," he said. "Lunatics never organize."—Stockton Labor Review.

ENGLISH WORKERS WANT 7-HOUR DAY AND 5-DAY WEEK

Demand 50 Per Cent Reduction in Cost of Necessaries and Threaten Force to Get It

Representatives of 200,000 machinery workers held a conference in Leeds, England, which was called to discuss the recent award of 75 cents a week increase made by the committee on production, and which was regarded as unsatisfactory.

A resolution was passed demanding a reduction of 50 per cent in the price of the necessities of life, and recommending that, in event of no effect resulting from the demand before October 15, 1917, such immediate action be taken as should secure it.

Resolutions were also passed in favor of a national minimum rate of wages, a seven-hour day and a five-day week. If the men are compelled to engage in a walkout to enforce their demands many thousands more are expected to go with them. The delegates declared that it was not shillings and pence that they wanted, but decent living conditions.

TWILIGHT OF CAPITALISM IS APPROACHING

That the American plutocracy is a tragic failure is asserted by Scott Nearing, chairman of the executive committee of the People's Council of America, in the fifth and last of a series of open letters to the New York Times. "The American business world is a business failure," Chairman Nearing declares, and the time has come for the people of the United States to take control of their own affairs, economic as well as political.

The letter reads: "Editor of the Times: I have written you four letters. I began by asking why the business interests were not in favor of an early peace, and then pointed out that American business had made billions of profits out of the war in Europe; that it was playing 'profiteer' and preparing to make billions more out of the war supplies furnished to the United States, and that the business interests were taking opportunity of the war crisis to launch an attack at the radical part of the labor movement under cover of patriotism. In this, the last of the letters, which I propose to write you, I desire to show that the American business world is a failure and that the time has come for the people of the United States to take control of their own affairs—economic as well as political.

"The American plutocracy has failed, tragically. "For more than 50 years—since the

end of the Civil war—big business has been in control of the United States. This control has been very complete. Based on the ownership of the natural resources, public utilities, mines, factories and stores, it has been extended to include newspapers, colleges, schools, churches and the other forces that share public opinion, as well as the machinery of government. President Wilson in his "New Freedom" calls particular attention to this complete domination by big business of American public life.

"Business, in control of the sources of power—economic, social and political—announced a 'business administration' of the world's affairs.

"The American business interests have enjoyed an unusual opportunity during the past half century. The wealth of the country increased 35 times between 1850 and 1916; the improvements in machinery, transportation and the use of electric power made possible a production of commodities sufficient to provide the necessities and most of the simple comforts of life for every man, woman and child in the United States. Education was spread broadcast. Knowledge increased. Never in modern times had it been easier to make a world fit for people to live in. This was the promise and the opportunity. What was the performance?"

"In 1916, after a half century of rule by 'business men,' the property ownership of the country was so concentrated that 2 per cent of the people owned 62 per cent of the wealth; while 6,000,000 families were living in poverty. In the richest nation on earth there were more poverty-stricken inhabitants in 1916 than the entire population in 1850. The cities reeked with misery, vice and crime. The struggle for bread was so terrible that men, women and even little children were working long hours, under barbarous conditions, for a pittance wage. Stunted bodies, misshapen minds and dwarfed souls were everywhere. Then came 1917. War, famine, disease, anguish and death were added to the lot of a world, which has been managed for half a century by business men, made safe for the business interests.

"The American plutocracy has been tried out for 50 years. It has had an opportunity to demonstrate what it could do. During 50 years of peace and unexampled prosperity it has plunged the United States into a condition of social disorganization which today approaches economic anarchy and social ruin.

"Business has failed. "The same business purposes and the same business spirit which predominates the American life, predominates likewise the British life, the French life, the German life and the Belgian life. The western world is a business-made world. The poverty, wretchedness, war, famine, and disease, which glare at us out of the oncoming winter are business-made results.

"Capitalism has had its chance. There has been ample opportunity for it to demonstrate its power as a civilizing agency. The result of the activity is world chaos.

"Many students of social affairs predicted the failure of capitalism. They pointed out that society organized for the profit of the few at the expense of the many, must necessarily break to pieces. They showed that the brutal heartlessness of industrial exploitation, as it was perpetuated under the capitalistic regime, must inevitably destroy itself.

"Competition belongs in the jungle. Even there many creatures have rejected it as a method of social organization.

"Society can be built upon one principle, and only one. That principle is co-operation. Service must be rendered for service; all must work together in the interests of all. Business is organized on the rule of tooth and claw. Society must be organized on the rule of mutual aid. The failure of the American plutocracy was inevitable. It is none the less deplorable that tens of millions of people must suffer because of the inability of the leaders of our civilization to comprehend the simplest principles of social organization.

"The plutocracy has had its day. The twilight of capitalism is coming. Business men will no longer rule the world that they have wrecked. The people are taking a hand.

"Already the people of Russia have undertaken to control their own affairs. Whether or not they succeed, the will is there; the way alone must be found.

"The time has come for the American people to follow the example of their Russian comrades. To throw aside the barbarisms of modern industrial society, to destroy economic parasitism; to annihilate all of the social institutions which enable one man to live upon another man's labor. The time has come for the peoples everywhere to take possession of the world and run it for the service of mankind.

"If you, Mr. Editor, are fortunate

enough to enjoy another 30 years of life, I think you will agree with me that people's rule, while by no means perfect, is infinitely preferable to the rule of an ignorant, misguided and narrow-visioned plutocracy.

"SCOTT NEARING."

"FINK" DEFINES STATUS

San Francisco, Nov.—A "fink" employed by the United Railroads, assures the public, in a local newspaper, that there is a vast difference between his profession and what he terms the ordinary, low-down scab, who is declared a cut-throat in the strikebreaking game, and who works for less wages than is paid unionists.

"The finks," he said, "stand up for their rights and get all they can get away with. You don't find any 'finks' working for small wages—that is, the old-time gang never did. But the scabs cut prices all the time. No decent 'fink' will associate with them.

"A job with good loot in it was the express drivers' strike in Chicago. There was a cop on every wagon, and we always had to split with them when we stole a package. We busted open every package that looked good."

This Is Just What We Have Said

Under the caption "Farmers and Land" writes one of our Portland contemporaries:

"One of the mirth-provoking jokes of the day is the failure of the chicken farmer.

"His experiences, related by smiling humorists, seldom fail to amuse the reader. He goes 'back to the land' from a city job, invests his savings in chickens, works hard for about three years, loses everything he has and returns to his city job sadder and wiser. The joke is varied now and then by inserting a fruit farmer or dairy-man in place of a chicken farmer. The plot is the same in all cases and the story ends in the same way.

"Frederick C. Howe makes something more than a joke of these common experiences in his current article on 'The Decay of Agriculture.' As he sees them, taken in the sum, they compose nothing less than a national tragedy. The total effect of such failures has been to reduce the per capita food production of the United States at an ominous rate. An example or two may be illuminating. From 1899 to 1915 our per capita meat production fell from 248 to 219 pounds, and milk from 95 to 75 gallons.

"It may surprise some readers to learn that the same causes which drive the chicken farmer back to the city in discouragement and failure are also at work to cut down our supply of meat and milk. The long and short of the situation is that the economic conditions under which the food producer must live and work are extirpating him. The American farmer who owns his land and tills it with his hands is disappearing.

"In some instances the land which he once farmed lies untilled. The enclosed but uncultivated farms in the United States cover 400,000,000 acres of good land. Some of the farms which were once tilled by those "horny handed sons of toil," so dear to the politicians, have been merged into immense feudal estates. Two hundred million acres of our best farm land have been disposed of in that way. The holdings in which they have been merged range from a minimum of 4000 acres up to several million. One-fourth of the tillable land in the United States is owned by 50,000 persons. Such a fact reminds one shivering of Ireland in its worst days.

"There is a third way by which the small farmer who owns his land disappears. His farm is lost by foreclosure and a tenant supplants the independent land owner. The increase of tenant farmers has been astonishingly rapid of late years.

"It is idle to detail these troubles without mentioning the cause and cure. The small farmer can not make a living because he is preyed upon by the transportation companies, by the city middlemen, by crudely inadequate marketing arrangements, by lack of distributing agencies, by scores of other parasites and hindrances. Society is organized to exploit him but not to help him except in some minor particulars.

The last sentence answers one-half of the question. Society is organized, not to help but to exploit the small farmer as well as all workingmen. Only by the elimination of all exploitation can the obsession be eradicated; that constitutes the cure. But if the intention is to return to the time when small farms were prevalent everywhere, or rather when there were none but small farms, the aim is retrogressive. Not back to small