

poorer in its command of goods and services, how are we to explain the fact that most of the working classes and a large number of contractors and profiteers — a majority of the population all together — 'have never had such a good time?' The answer seems to be that the war has caused a great change in the distribution of wealth, or of buying power. The minority have spent less on themselves and their own enjoyment than they did, and this abstinence — voluntary or compulsory — has meant a transfer of buying power, through the hands of the government, to the working classes and to those who have earned, or got, war profits. The class of small rentiers, living on fixed money incomes derived from investments, has been terribly hit both by high prices and by high taxation. This is the class which has really suffered war privation, except in so far as members of their families have been able to earn something by war work. The very rich have had a large part of their normal expenditure cut off by the enlistment of their men servants, grooms, gardeners, gamekeepers, chauffeurs, etc., by petrol restrictions, by the commandeering of their motor cars, houses, yachts, horses, etc., and by the impossibility of foreign travel. High taxation has relieved them of a considerable part of the savings that this enforced abstinence has produced, and the rest of it has gone into War Loans to be spent by the government and so handed over to the classes who were doing war work, or to the soldiers and sailors and their dependents. If one man who used to spend £40,000 a year on the amusements and diversions customary to his position has been able to spend only £10,000 of it during the war, the distribution of the odd £30,000 through, perhaps, 200 families by war expenditure would make a very considerable difference to the gen-

eral standard of comfort. Whether retrenchment by the rich has been on this scale it is impossible to say, but at least it is clear that much of their expenditure has been forcibly cut down, and a good deal, no doubt, has been voluntarily cut down under the stimulus of patriotism, since people who have been accustomed to handling big incomes have usually more sense of responsibility in the spending of them than those who have lately and quickly acquired them. And it is satisfactory, from the point of view of the well-being of the country as a whole, to note that this widening of the distribution of buying power, and improvement of the workers' standard, to some extent will be permanent. Some people argue that the rich, as a whole, have grown richer by the war, owing to their big subscriptions to War Loans. But if, as seems likely, the large proportion of the debt charge will be raised at their expense, by heavy direct taxation, their share of after-war taxation will be bigger than their share of the interest on the debt.

Land and Water

THE CAUSE OF STRIKES

THERE are few signs in the world at present of the coming of that 'brotherhood of the classes' which some prophets foretold as the result of the war for democracy. From almost every country comes news of labor unrest on a large scale, and from most countries, of serious strikes often developing into civil disturbances. It is, of course, easy to exaggerate the significance of such movements, whose precise importance the continued activity of the various censorships makes it very difficult to ascertain. But enough reliable information comes through to make it certain that revolution is at least a

possibility in certain of the most important Allied countries.

As we write, it is by no means certain how the French and Italian strike movements will develop. It is clear that the immediate causes of the various stoppages both in Paris and in the provinces are almost purely economic; but it is equally clear that the undercurrent of political unrest is exceedingly strong, and that the movement of events may easily transform the strikes from economic into political phenomena. At present, the *Confédération Générale du Travail* is holding its hand; but if it joins in and declares a political general strike, it is impossible to say where the trouble will end. In Italy, the political character of the strikes, especially among the seamen, appears more plainly on the surface, and the refusal of certain crews to sail with munitions intended for Russia is obviously an event of first-class significance. But, even in Italy, it would be difficult to say whether political or economic causes play the greater part in the unrest. In Canada and the United States the origin of most of the trouble was certainly economic, and the character of the Winnipeg movement only shows how far in these days a purely economic strike is likely to carry the participants.

The plain fact is that all over Europe, and to an increasing extent in America also, the armies are mobilizing for something like a class war. Economic movements have a rapidly growing tendency to become political, not only because the workers possess a greatly increased power and are far more conscious of it, but also because their economic claims are animated by a steadily deepening hostility to the whole capitalist order of society. Not only do the workers feel stronger—they have also a growing feeling that capitalism is insecure. The greatest

barrier to labor unrest before the war was the widespread conviction that capitalism was inevitable—that it had been in possession ever since the workers could remember, and that there were no signs that it was likely to come to an end. To-day the world, and the workers, perhaps, most of all, have lost the feeling of certainty about anything. We have come through such changes already that no change for better or worse now seems altogether impossible. Empires, apparently strong and impregnable, have perished almost in a night; new nations have arisen; two great countries are actually governed by extreme Socialists, and several others by Socialists of a milder type. After the fall of the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Romanoffs, after the coming of Soviet Russia and of Soviet Hungary, who, whatever his attitude toward these things, will dare to affirm that revolutionary social changes are impossible in his own country? Who will hold an untarnished faith in the permanence and inviolability of the old order?

In this country, we have so far been less affected than any Continental people by the prevailing unrest. But here, too, the same forces are at work. More than six months after the termination of hostilities, how different is our economic situation from that which was foreshadowed by the optimists who told us of the blessings of 'reconstruction.' We, too, are a prey to insecurity; we, too, are grown more tolerant of daring adventures and more credulous of Utopian speculations. Our manufacturers and traders, however grandiose the plans which they lay for the future, lack confidence. They know not what the morrow may bring forth, either at home or abroad. Accordingly, they tend to put off till to-morrow what they would do to-day if they felt secure, with the result that

unemployment remains a problem and, in the absence of production, prices continue to rise. The workman, for his part, is equally uncertain of the future, and, therefore, as well as because he feels stronger in his organization, more ready to take the risks and more disposed to listen to the advocacy of a new social order. It is, however, true that in Great Britain we are only at the beginning of a process which has gone much further on the Continent of Europe. There, the dissolution of the old order is manifestly in progress; here, the dissolution is only vaguely present so far in men's minds, and has not yet seriously affected their everyday actions.

The fundamental causes of the world-wide unrest are mainly economic. Some peculiarly bad clause in the Peace Treaty, some blunder of the politicians, some manifestation of militarist reaction, may prove to be the spark which will set the world ablaze. But the fundamental cause of the conflagration will lie deep down in the economic system. The workers of France or Italy or Great Britain will rise in revolt, not really because injustice is being done to the workers of Germany or Hungary or Russia, but because in every country it is becoming increasingly difficult, as the Coal Commission has abundantly shown, for the workers to live any longer under an economic system devoted primarily to the making of profit. This is not to say that a majority, or anything like a majority, is consciously demanding the overthrow of the capitalist system. Socialism of any constructive sort remains, probably in every country, the creed of a minority. But even the majority which has not attempted to formulate a constructive opinion has changed. The pre-war industrial system rested upon the general acquiescence of the workers in the subordination of their

personality to the needs of industry as interpreted by capitalists and employers. It was possible only because it was able to treat labor as a thing instead of a number of persons, and because labor, though it kicked occasionally, as a rule acquiesced in that treatment. To-day, nearly everyone has a higher conceit of himself than he had before. Nearly everyone makes not only higher material claims, which are hard enough for capitalism to satisfy, but also higher human claims, which it has no means at all of satisfying, and which most of its protagonists do not even attempt to understand. We are face to face with the fact that the war has taught the workers in almost every country to assert their human claims by putting forth the vast economic strength which hitherto they have not known how to use.

To-day, men are refusing any longer to believe that they were made for industry, and are asserting vehemently that industry was made for all men, and must adjust itself to, and comply with, human needs. That is the real meaning of the world-wide unrest, the real moral of the repeated strikes, from whatever immediate causes they may spring.

The question, then, for statesmen in all countries is whether the economic and social system can transform itself so as to comply with the new human standards of value by which it is being judged. If it cannot, it will go to pieces, not perhaps this year, but next year or the year after, or at least within the next decade. Many people see that this is true of a large part of Europe, and yet believe that Great Britain is somehow mysteriously immune from the coming epidemic of social and industrial revolution. There could be no greater mistake. What is true of Europe is true

of us; and it is certain that we must either undertake the complete overhauling of our industrial system, or else plunge slowly after our neighbors into a chaos out of which a better order may arise, but which will certainly first cause untold suffering in every class.

It may be we shall rise the last as Frenchmen rose the first,
Our wrath come after Russia's wrath, and
our wrath be the worst.

If we are to escape such an ending to our knight-errantry on behalf of world-democracy, we shall do well to set our house in order. But where and how are we to make a beginning? The system of private profit has us, like our neighbor nations, in its toils. Our Ministers of State are still declaring that they desire to see high profits, because high profits are essential to the rapid and successful development of industry. Our employers have still no suggestion for a remedy for social ills beyond a reiteration of the demand for increased production. Yet surely it is obvious to anyone who looks with half an eye at the industrial situation, that the problem of production is only part of a general psychological problem, and that there can be no solution of it, and no creation of industrial efficiency, unless the idea of production is related to the idea of service. If we want efficiency, we must persuade the workers that it is worth while, and their bounden duty, to do their best; but this we cannot do while we still ask them to work under a

system which, from any moral standpoint, is utterly indefensible. The only appeal which can restore the world to good order is a moral appeal; and such an appeal, under present conditions, we simply have not the right to make. It is true that our position is in this respect certainly no worse than that of other nations; but it is a scant consolation if we must all perish together for our sins.

There is no need to take a sensational view in order to emphasize the gravity of the strikes which are now epidemic in every industrial country. The chances are that neither in France nor in Italy will the present movements take a definitely revolutionary turn. They may even begin to blow over before this article appears. But that does not make them any the less serious; for they are manifestations of a general sense of insecurity and dissatisfaction which is everywhere and every day growing stronger and more insistent. It is out of economic movements that, under present conditions, political movements are almost bound to proceed; and, even if the present troubles blow over, we can be sure that others will follow unless the root evils which create them are removed. Yet where in Europe to-day, if we except, without judging, the Soviet countries, is the government with either the courage or the power to tackle one of these root evils? Can we be surprised if we drift ever faster toward the rapids?

The New Statesman

TALK OF EUROPE

THE sittings of the British Coal Commission, though long drawn out, were not dull affairs. The duel of wits between Mr. Smillie, representative of the miners, and the young Duke of Northumberland, an owner, was, perhaps, the cream of the fun. Under the title, 'A Short Way with Dukes,' the Tory *Saturday Review* prints a satire of the proceedings. 'Mr. Gabb' is Mr. Sidney Webb; 'Sir Twopenza Penny' is Sir Leo Chiozza Money, late Parliamentary Secretary of Shipping.

Mr. Smiler.—Have the tumbrils arrived? Send up the miscreants and put them in the dock.

(Enter the Duke of Nomansland.)

Mr. Smiler.—What is your trade or occupation?

Duke of N.—I am a landowner.

Mr. Smiler.—If you had read Blackstone, Coke, and Sheppard's Touchstone, you would know that such a claim is unknown to the law and against public policy.

The Duke of N.—Sorry. I have not read them yet.

Mr. Smiler.—Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Mr. Gabb and Sir Twopenza Penny.—As impartial members of this Commission, we concur in that observation.

The Chairman.—We should all be grateful to Mr. Smiler for it.

Mr. Smiler.—How often do you read your title-deeds?

The Duke of N.—I have never read them. (Incredulous laughter.)

Mr. Smiler.—Do you ask us to believe you?

The Duke of N.—No.

Mr. Smiler.—Do you know the Rule in Shelley's case?

The Duke of N.—Whose case?

Mr. Smiler.—Shelley, the labor poet.

The Chairman.—Ahem! Thank you so much, Mr. Smiler; but I think there was another of the name.

Mr. Smiler (to the Duke of N.).—You are quibbling and confusing the issue. If

you had studied *Ferne on Contingent Remainders*, you would know that you were bound to provide warm baths and shampoos at the pit-head for the noble toilers to whom we owe our heat and light.

The Duke of N.—I don't know—I have been at the front for four years and —

Mr. Smiler.—Don't attempt to try a worthless alibi on us. We won't have it.

Mr. Gabb and Sir Twopenza Penny.—Rank militarism! We won't have it. (Applause.)

The Chairman.—I humbly thank you, gentlemen.

Mr. Smiler.—What King came next after William the Conqueror?

The Duke of N.—I don't remember. (Sensation.)

Mr. Smiler.—You don't remember! You know very well that your robber ancestor walked beside the perambulator of the infant William Rufus and forced a charter from the innocent child. Since then, at the rate of 5*d.* a ton, with compound interest and rents, you owe the workingman more than the German War Debt. Remove the prisoner.

MR. JUSTICE DARLING, London's most famous legal wit, has created a stir by saying that the harm which the war had done to the morals of the people of Britain was far beyond any material damage that had been done. Lady Burbidge, replying for women, will have none of the accusation. In a letter to the *Sunday Times*, she writes:

'The allegation that the war has brought about a lapse in woman's morals generally has been heard almost from the first day when woman was called upon to play her part in the conflict. It engaged my attention so much that, throughout my long and varied experience of women war-workers, I have kept my eyes open, because I was so exceedingly anxious to see for myself how women would comport themselves in the new spheres which the war had opened to them. It offered to