

# THE MANIFESTO OF FRENCH LABOR

BY ROGER PICARD

Not long ago the delegates of the workmen's federations and unions met at the Winter Circus to unfold their ideas concerning the peace and the economic reorganization of France. We shall confine ourselves to a résumé of the economic and social ideas of the working class, for in regard to the question of peace, the policy of French unionism has been clear. They have pronounced themselves in favor of the League of Nations, of the right of national self-determination, they have spoken against reprisals and have reclaimed with a certain vagueness, perhaps, a full amnesty for all.

Well aware of the rôle played by workmen during the war, and of the task which awaits the working class in the coming epoch, the General Confederation of Labor believes that the workers should be called to share in the debates of the peace conference. 'We claim an official share in the proceedings of the conference,' they say, without specifying whether this simply translates the desire to see a workman or two at the conference or whether beside the other technical experts in finance, in military matters, and in economic law, they wish to see a technical expert in the matter of labor.

The economic programme of the General Confederation is far more complete and precise than its programme of international action. It contains clauses concerning the relations of nations, the international organization of labor, the reorganization of a country's economic life; it dwells on

the rights and the sphere of action of the public power; certain sections deal with the workingman's relation to circumstances born of the war.

The French working classes resolutely set their faces against all economic war and even against all policy of protection; they see in such political action not only the danger of armed conflicts but also the peril of spoliation for themselves. In fact, this free trade policy of the Confederation has been pursued with such merciless logic that it has led to the classic dogmas of political economy; the workers are now for having production internationalized and each country instructed to specialize in that branch of production for which Nature has intended it; thus will be avoided, they declare, 'those deceiving schemes which have hindered that free exchange of goods which Nature makes necessary among men.'

Without stopping here to reopen the Protection-Free-Trade controversy and without pausing to argue as to whether Nature imposes on Humanity one system or the other, we must realize that the necessity of provisioning ourselves cheaply and quickly will plead in favor of free trade; also let us note in passing that the idea of an allied tariff wall encircling the Central Empires has been seriously shaken by this attitude.

We shall pass on to the next great formula of the workers, 'that the great highways of ocean communication should be open without restriction to ships of all countries.' We are dealing

now with the famous principle of the freedom of the seas, a principle which I personally have never been able to understand. The freedom of the seas has never, as far as I know, been limited for vessels in time of peace; it seems to me useless, therefore, to urge it imperatively as a clause of a future treaty. As for the liberty of the seas in time of war, why should the sea be more open than the earth frontier of the belligerents? No one has yet claimed the freedom of the earth!

The workingmen's programme not only demands free trade; but it also desires to see that trade organized by the common consent of the various States; it foresees the creation of an international bureau of transportation, a kind of court for the division of raw materials, and a universal accord for the exploitation of colonial lands. The programme does not allow complete commercial liberty; it makes allowances for the conditions fostered by the war. For it would seem dangerous to abandon the measures taken by the Allies for the control of raw material; a return to absolute liberty would allow certain countries to retain all their production of raw material or to sell it at so high a price that it would work mischief to others. Moreover, the division of tonnage among the various nations should permit each nation to supply itself regularly.

By the side of these very general problems the programme of the Confederation touches another with international relations, a special problem, that of the employment of foreign workmen.

We have said elsewhere that the French workingman was no hater of the stranger; he merely wishes that his well-being, his scale of living be not lowered by the introduction of foreign labor into French industries.

To-day our workers still claim the right of every man to work freely in every country; they ask, however, that all those working in France, strangers or citizens, be paid the same wages. Moreover, to avoid an invasion of their various trades by foreign workmen whose presence would lead to a lowering of salaries, the Confederation asks that the migrations of workers be placed under the control of a committee composed of various nationalities, this committee to fix the limit to which a foreign personnel may be recruited. This same control is to be extended over races of color in the interest of whose intellectual level French workers demand the organizing of elementary schools at industrial plants.

But international problems occupy the workingman less than the profound transformations which are becoming necessary and already declaring themselves in our national economic life. To produce with intensity, to use only the most modern machinery, to exploit to the full and with system all the resources of the country, taking no heed of economic Malthusianism, to capitalize all capacities and assets, these be the great principles which should underlie our national reorganization.

Upon the nation, represented by its government, lies the duty of looking to the carrying out of these principles, but the nation must be understood to possess the right to profit by the results which the common economic effort will bring to pass. It should not permit enormous and abnormal fortunes, which are always the product of the common energy of the country.

Guardian of the general right, the nation should exercise control over all the branches of production, the nation in particular should not abandon to individuals that which is the property

of all. Let no one, however, take these words in the sense that French labor is aiming at the nationalization of industry. Such is not the case. Let us quote directly from the programme.

'If it is not desirable,' says the programme, 'to extend the direct management of the State over all things, it is none the less essential that nothing which is necessary to personal family and national life should be delivered over to private interests, without having established over those interests a control which will oblige them to direct their efforts along the road of common interest.' This control, it appears, will be applied by agents of the State, and by delegates from the great associations of producers and consumers.<sup>3</sup> This union of powers will result in the control of the industry by all those interested. We have before us a new conception of national control. The Confederation thus expresses its desire—

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'Whenever a capitalist organization has in its power a raw material or a matter necessary to the production of a raw material, the monopoly of the State will be imposed as a means of stabilizing the production and directing its flow.'

But, the programme continues, the economic reorganization of the country and the exploitation of the national wealth will be profitable only if the nation will confide the working of the reorganization to the various departments, communes, and local bodies, above all, to committees administered by qualified representatives of producers and consumers.

This programme may be summed up in a few formulas, the control of private industry, the participation of the State in the direction of certain economic interests, the decentralization of power, and the giving over of economic rule to the general mass.

## DAWN ON THE SOMME

LAST night rain fell over the scarred plateau  
 And now from the dark horizon, dazzling, flies  
 Arrow on fire-plumed arrow to the skies  
 Shot from the bright arc of Apollo's bow;  
 And from the wild and writhen waste below,  
 From flashing pools and mounds lit one by one,  
 O is it mist or are these companies  
 Of morning heroes who arise, arise  
 With thrusting arms, with limbs and hair aglow  
 Toward the risen god, upon whose brow  
 Burns the gold laurel of all victories,  
 Hero and hero's god, th' invincible Sun?

*Reveille*

*By Robert Nichols.*

## EUROPEAN COMMENT ON PRESIDENT WILSON'S VISIT

### 1. *From L'Echo de Paris*

It is but justice that in these days all France should acclaim President Wilson. The service he rendered us in March, 1917, when he threw the sword of America into the balance with a truly formidable energy, will have its effect on all our future history. Had it not been for that decisive act of his, France would not be what she is today, would never have had the chance to be what she is going to be.

The great merit of the President is to have understood that the war could not be fought by halves, that the nations taking part in it could not limit their individual responsibilities as if they were so many separate business houses. Once the struggle was on in full force, no compromise was possible. The league of liberty either must strike down the league of imperialism or be struck down by it. In the days that followed victory, while we were mentally reviewing the various great battles in which the American troops had held their share of the line, while we were reading the casualty list published at Washington, we were perhaps, misled by our memories of the accomplishments and sufferings of the French and British troops into underestimating the value of the coöperation which came to us from the other side of the Atlantic. A party existed in the Allied countries, which, despairing of finding a military solution of the war, was inclined to end it by some kind of diplomatic arrangement. Then President Wilson spoke forth, and the pusillanimous policy was given over. Our generals, seeing our resources in

men and material being reduced day by day hesitated to gamble in a supreme counter-attack the forces which they had left; then the immense preparations of America came to light and our leaders saw that even in the case of a disaster, there was a reserve power at hand to throw against the enemy. They took the risk, therefore, of the August offensive. On the other hand, when our enemies beheld 300,000 soldiers of the New World crossing the seas every month, at a time when the East no longer yielded them soldiers and their facilities of transportation were scarcely able to carry two divisions a week from East to West, at heart they felt themselves beaten long before they even approached the field of battle. By July, 1917, following the tightening of the blockade around several little neutral States which the Allies had not quite been able to handle, our enemies understood only too well what it meant to bring the greatest neutral State in the world into the ranks of their enemies. Yet even then, though they felt the economic force of America's anger, they could not bring themselves to believe in her military power. They were to read their destiny by the light of Pershing's gleaming bayonets; the lightning was about to strike them.

Such are the benefits which we owe to President Wilson and his citizens. Now that the terms of the armistice are signed, we must work to secure peace. It is our task to create a world order bringing with it the most stable guarantees of peace and free development. In relation to this new task, President Wilson represents what one