

British Industry in a Deadlock

THE British coal crisis seems at this writing likely to terminate in a compromise granting the miners an immediate increase but making future wages partially dependent upon output. The fundamental questions of nationalization and control are left untouched. Such peace can only be an armistice while the opposing forces measure their strength for future combat. The miners know that they were worsted in the preliminary negotiations and maneuvered into letting the issue center no longer round a question of principle that clearly concerned every consumer, but round a mere wages issue on which a considerable part of that amorphous mass called the "public" must be against them. From the moment when the miners allowed their original demand for a reduction in the price of coal to fall into the background, it was evident that, if they fought, they would fight at a serious disadvantage. The leaders of the trade unions in other industries clearly did not want a general industrial crisis. Had it come they would sooner or later have thrown in their lot with the miners; but in some cases it would have been done grudgingly or partially.

Something like a deadlock has been reached in the world of labor in Great Britain, and this because the trade unions lost their opportunity immediately after the Armistice. The acute industrial unrest of February, 1919, was a turning-point; the miners were threatening immediate industrial action for public ownership and democratic control of the mines, and in almost every industry, great or small, acute industrial troubles seemed imminent. The Government bought off the miners by what seemed the very big concession of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry, with a pledge that its recommendations would be carried into effect. It quieted discontent elsewhere by summoning the National Industrial Conference, on which the attitude of the employers clearly showed that they were prepared to make considerable concessions. But by the time these two bodies reported the psychological moment had passed.

The Government refused to carry out the recommendations either of the Coal Industry Commission or of the Industrial Conference, although in the latter case the proposals were put forward unanimously by employers and workers alike. Repeated efforts have been made peacefully to persuade the Government to alter its attitude; but it has come more completely under the domination of the big industrial and financial interests; and these interests, having consolidated their forces and, as they believe, taken their opponents' measure, are less ready to abate any of their powers.

This increased confidence of the British ruling classes is founded partly on the rapid collapse of the artificial industrial prosperity caused by the war, and the rapid return of the unemployment which temporarily ceased during the war years. But when unemployment passes a certain intensity, which it seems likely soon to reach, it changes its effect, especially under present psychological conditions. Men are not prepared to tolerate the perpetual insecurity which has been characteristic of British industrial conditions with the old acquiescence and fatalism; they will now be moved far more easily to positive resentment. The employers, however, have come to believe that the British workers' bark is far worse than their bite, and that there is after all not the substance which they had supposed behind their new policies

and their demands for control. One salutary lesson, a good many employers may be heard to say, will serve to prick the bubble of labor extremism.

The outcome, so far, of the miners' dispute may seem to justify this view. It is undoubtedly the case that many of the hopes and fears which have been built on British labor are out of all proportion to the reality, and that labor is still unprepared for any great or decisive step. Still conscious of its weakness even more than of its strength, British labor hesitates, and will for some time hesitate, to fling out to the Government or to the employers a final challenge. It will again, as it has done several times already, march almost up to the ramparts of British capitalism only to beat at the last moment a strategic retreat. But the game of maneuver at which all three parties—employers, Government, and labor—are at present playing is an intricate game. A false move by any of the parties may precipitate a conflict more decisive and widespread than any of them intends, and it would be a very hard-fought and protracted struggle, on the outcome of which neither side could reckon with confidence. Such a situation almost arose on the occasion of the national railway strike of 1919. But both sides accepted a compromise as soon as they realized whither the conflict was tending; and this time again the settlement seems likely to be meaningless and temporary.

Such compromises, however, settle nothing. The root problems which are impeding efficiency and causing a slow disintegration of the economic system are left untouched. At present neither party has the intensity of will necessary for a definite reaction or a clean-cut advance. Great Britain drifts. Drifting steadily worsens the position, and makes the material task of reorganization more difficult. The change of system might still be accomplished peaceably and without a quite chaotic period if the working-class organizations possessed a definitely realized and imagined policy of economic reorganization. They are, indeed, gradually developing that policy; but it is doubtful whether it can reach maturity in time to avert much trouble.

The Rush to the Colleges

THE early reports of college and university enrolment indicate that 1920-21 is to see an even larger number of students than 1919-20 and that the remarkable increase in attendance which has been going on for the past five or six years is still unchecked. Columbia University reports over 16,000 actual candidates for degrees, and probably as many more will receive some sort of instruction from one department or other of the University during the year. The College of the City of New York reports over 15,000; the University of California over 11,000; New York University over 9,000; Boston University and the University of Illinois over 8,000 each; the University of Wisconsin over 7,000; Northwestern University over 6,000; and Chicago, Cornell, and Harvard over 5,000 each. In the smaller institutions there is much the same rise in attendance, in several cases an advance of more than 300 per cent over 1917. The Institute for Public Service has issued an interesting bulletin on the increases from 1914 to 1917, and from 1917 to 1920. The 210 colleges and universities covered by this survey had in 1914 a total enrolment of 187,000; in 1920 the total was 294,000. If they increase by the same

number of students annually they will have, the Institute for Public Service calculates, 471,000 in 1930 and 831,000 in 1950. If they increase by the same percentage annually, they will have 659,000 in 1930, and 1,138,000 in 1950.

Even though it is highly improbable that the present rate of increase will be maintained for a generation, the certain increases are sufficient to tax the powers of all the higher institutions now in existence. The burden is already great. As every college student in America has ordinarily cost far more than he paid for his education, the effect of the multiplication of students has naturally been a multiplication of annual deficits. Where additional funds were forthcoming from an increase of fees or from gifts the burden has not been altogether unendurable. But in certain of the State universities, where the rise in attendance has been especially marked, the situation is precarious. Many of the States are in the convulsions of economy which regularly follow wars. Needed building cannot be undertaken to house the swarms of students, or to provide them with class-rooms and laboratories. Libraries are suffering. Lecture groups and quiz sections have to be larger than before, and too large for the best results. The heaviest burden falls, as usual, upon the professor, who with only a slight increase of his salary—in spite of much talk of “drives” in the newspapers—has to do more work than ever before, without even recourse to the sort of assistants who could once be hired to do part of the drudgery of teaching, but who now cannot be obtained because there is no money to pay them. Lucky the professor in a State university who has received as much as fifteen per cent increase in his salary since 1914, and who has to teach only thirty per cent more students than he then taught!

Emphasis cannot be laid too often upon the fact that the status of the American university professor has undergone, in various respects, a steady deterioration in the past hundred years. This is particularly true as regards money payment. In 1876 the salary of a professor at Columbia was fixed at \$7,500 and that of a tutor as \$2,000; in 1919 the salary of a professor in the same university was fixed at from \$6,000 to \$8,000 and that of an instructor at \$2,000. At other universities much the same set of facts might be cited. Yet when the new salary schedules for various universities were announced last year the general opinion seemed to be that something handsome had been done for the professors. As a matter of fact, merely a new step had been taken in the exploitation of the American scholar. Ever since the Civil War his academic duties have grown heavier. As students have become more numerous in the different departments and tutors or instructors have had to be added, the professors in charge have allowed the per capita payment for the teachers of the department to fall lower and lower. Less and less competent instructors have been added, and when in turn they have become professors by the operation of seniority they have seemed worth less than the full stipend and so have dragged the salary level down. The plea that these were scholars making sacrifices for the sake of poor and deserving young men is largely nonsense. The majority of college students are able to pay the full cost of what they receive, and many of them have larger sums for spending money than their teachers have for salaries. What earthly excuse is there for charging a rich man's son half what he ought to pay and then paying a professor half what he ought to get? There is none.

“More Thrilling than Fiction”

LITTLE by little the truth about the war prevails. One of its mightiest warriors—of the stay-at-home variety—John R. Rathom, editor of the *Providence Journal*, late in 1917 wrote a series of articles, “Germany's Plots Exposed,” for the *World's Work*, widely advertised as follows:

How the devilishly cunning plots to kill our people, sink our ships, dynamite our factories, and disrupt our national life were run down and thwarted. More thrilling than fiction, and, withal, the most patriotic service to America since the war began. It is the modestly told story of a brave editor and resourceful reporters who beat the Germans at their own game.

But after one issue, “The Great Rathom Series,” scheduled to appear for one year, which the *World's Work* predicted would make it the “most talked of, the most quoted, the most eagerly sought for magazine in America” was suddenly withdrawn. Rathom, who in frequent public addresses was modestly admitting his exploits, explained that the cessation of the articles was decided upon from “motives of patriotism.” Now it appears that on February 12, 1918, Rathom, at the instance of the United States Government and by advice of counsel, signed a confession admitting the falsity, or such exaggeration that it equaled falsity, of almost all of these revelations and exposures.

No one who is in any doubt about the shameful deception that was practiced in this country throughout the war—and indeed in every country, for it is an inevitable by-product of war—should fail to study the amazing confession of John Revelstoke Rathom, British-born and bred, arch-patrioteer and super-spy-hunter, editor and moulder of public opinion, director and member of the executive committee of the Associated Press. While “patriotism” was smeared thick over all his utterances and works, Rathom's role was wholly un-American. The vaunted exploits of his editors and reporters he has now admitted were myths, and what little information he did have as the basis for his sensations was supplied by British secret agents whose tool he was, and who used him for their own purposes. And this dime-novel clap-trap was the sort of propaganda with which the country was drugged, as *The Nation* has repeatedly shown. As for Mr. Rathom, he is aptly characterized by the *New York World*, which declares in an editorial entitled “Confessions of a Faker,” that his confession is “one which for comprehensive avowals of downright falsehood has few parallels in the annals of mendacity.”

On the other hand, the incident sheds no enviable radiance on Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mr. Francis G. Caffey, and other officials behind the scenes, on the opposite side of the controversy. Mr. Rathom recently made charges derogatory to the naval administration of Roosevelt; a United States District Attorney owing his appointment to Roosevelt's political party makes public facts long possessed by the Government; facts which should instantly have been given to the American people, but are only now divulged for the sole purpose of discrediting personally a political opponent of the Administration. That they do this successfully does not for one moment lessen the indecency of the procedure. The Government which suppressed this important information, contributing in that way—among others—to the war hysteria and terrorism, and publishes it only to aid the political ends of one of its henchmen, is an accessory after the fact to Mr. Rathom's malfeasance.