

So-Called Industrial Peace

MANY people seem to think that industrial peace is synonymous with their peace of mind. If nobody complains, if they are able to conduct business without strikes or agitation, they are satisfied. But as a matter of fact such a state of non-resistance may signify a profound disease. The most docile of all laborers are the children. We hear of no strikes where child labor prevails. Young girls, in fact, most women workers, accept the conditions imposed upon them without creating much disturbance. Women are difficult to unionize, the shops where they work are generally "open," they show few signs of "envy," they rarely follow "agitators." But the industrial peace which these women and children endure is for imaginative people the most terrible fact in the situation.

There are, moreover, all over the country industries in which every attempt at collective action is crushed with an iron hand. It may be that the men live in privately owned towns, with their homes, their schools, their churches, their jobs, their politics, all at the mercy of one control. It may be that they are forbidden to meet, as in the steel district, where men do not dare to discuss their own interests. It may be that every attempt to unionize is met by discharging the "ringleader," by mixing races and religions so that any kind of homogeneity is impossible. There is in many places an atmosphere of terrorism, a fear of spies, and a general ruthless domination of private affairs, against which few men have the courage to rebel. When beneath it all there is a rumbling and ugly threat, we hear about "industrial unrest," and well-meaning men set out to establish "peace." The despot becomes benevolent. Hospitals, swimming pools, Y.M.C.A.'s, "profit-sharing," are bestowed, evidently in complete oblivion of the fact that there would be little manhood in men who accepted these benefits at the price of submission. When Circe changed warriors into swine she fed them well, but their tragedy was that they liked it.

The problem of industrial peace is not to keep people quiet. The problem is to create conditions in which men can meet each other as equals, where they must treat each other with so much respect that no haphazard, careless despotism is possible. In that frame of mind alone will it become possible to develop the habit of settling their questions on the evidence in accord with reason. But the mere statement of the goal shows how far away from it we are to-day. In the recent hearings held before the Industrial Relations Commissions, the economic leaders of the nation with

though they had power, they exercised little responsibility.

How then are changes to be made? The men at the head are badly informed, probably overworked, and on the whole not very much interested. The workers are under suspicion if they take an interest in the management. And the public, that vague, sprawling and indefinite conglomeration, is generally busy, too busy to think much about what is going on in obscure mining gulches, around distant blast furnaces, in nerve-wracked textile mills, in the basements of department stores. For in its worst corners our civilization is dumb, and everywhere it is rather deaf.

This is the simple and rather obvious reason why we cannot get along without "unrest" and agitation. The great "constructive" plans of statesmen are built upon them; the careful improvements of the more reasonable reformers draw their impetus from them. It is an open debt which the wisest reformers acknowledge, for we are all of us freer to-day to speak, to make proposals, to offer criticisms which would have got no hearing whatever if loud threats had not been made and ugly fists raised in anger. When we are told that conservative reform is all right, when the more temperate men are listened to carefully, we should not forget that all our proposals seem conservative and temperate only by contrast, that a few years ago the same industrial leaders who are now so open-minded denounced the meagerest reform as if it were the crack of doom.

Last winter the I.W.W. invaded the churches of New York. This winter the churches have organized to deal with unemployment. Last winter there were riots. This winter the head of the United States Steel Corporation is chairman of the committee to deal with unemployment. Of course there may be no causal connection. The committee which he heads is, however, not prepared to deal very drastically with the situation; certain city officials are very obstructive. There has been no unemployed demonstration this winter. Of course there may be no causal connection.

Nevertheless, those who dislike agitators ought to ask themselves what they propose to substitute for them. Just how, for example, do they intend to arouse interest in obscure injustice? Do they suppose men will think who have not first been made to feel? Do they suppose that they will feel until they have had brutal facts forced upon them? Surely it is idle to suppose that the "public" is a sensitive, wise, interested, courageous, active body of responsible people. We are all members of the "public," and we might as well

to see some phase that needs correction. We know the horror of child labor, for example, though most of us do nothing about it. Sometimes a mere narrative of what conditions are arouses us. But on the whole we do not move unless we are prodded, and we need the gadfly every bit as much to-day as when Socrates recommended it.

Only those who have great power do not have to agitate. If the directors of the Steel Corporation wish to change conditions in their plants they will not have to hold mass meetings and march in parades. But a group without power, a disfranchised group, has to do more than convince itself that what it wants is wise. It has to convince others, and make those others take an interest in the plan. That is why suffragists have to talk on street corners, get their pictures into the papers, go on "hikes," interrupt public meetings, and dress up as Joan of Arc. The same is true of the industrially disfranchised. The railroad engineers can present their demands, sit down at a long table and argue their case through statisticians and lawyers. But the miners of Colorado or West Virginia or Calumet, the steel workers of Pittsburg, the spinners and weavers of Paterson, the textile workers of Lawrence and Lowell, are industrially disfranchised, and every time they wish to make some advance they have to start a little rebellion.

The answer to them is not to suppress the rebellion, to ask that they should make peace at any price. In industry, as among nations, there can be false, dishonorable, and disastrous peace. There can be the inhuman peace of an efficient despotism, but it will purchase a temporary comfort of mind at a cost which no people can pay and still call itself free. For to those who have not settled into a panicky fear, the quiet of those who submit is often far more ominous than the disturbance of those who rebel.

Contraband and Common Sense

IN his letter to Senator Stone, Secretary Bryan puts up an able defense of the behavior of this government towards the warring nations in Europe. He is able to show that all the official acts of the United States in reference to the belligerents are sanctioned by established international practice, and that if the government had behaved as certain of its critics have advised, it would have given just cause of offense either to the Allies or to Germany and Austria. The technical justification is complete. It is a pity that the anti-

to be done, the administration is to be congratulated on so unimpeachable a legal record and so candid and dignified a justification of its course.

The correct attitude of our government has not been fully appreciated in Europe. The European governments have not, to be sure, had any legal grounds for complaint, but European public opinion at the present time is none the less very much disgruntled with the behavior of this country. Americans should recognize the fact that so far from being popular in Europe, they are disliked in Germany and their motives are questioned in England. The Germans resent the sympathy which American public opinion has on the whole shown towards the Allies. They have resented it from the start, but in the beginning they suppressed their feelings because they hoped to persuade Americans of the righteousness of the German cause. They realize now that they have not succeeded and cannot do so; and Americans who have returned recently from Germany testify to the growth in that country of an angry anti-Americanism. Neither is the situation much better in England. Englishmen were deeply wounded by the American note in respect to contraband. They do not for the most part dispute the fact that the American government had good grounds for protest under the laws of nations, but they claim to be fighting the battle of all neutral and pacific powers, and they ask for a clearer appreciation in this country of the legitimacy as a belligerent measure of the English effort to deprive the enemy of war supplies.

In the case of Germany a certain amount of resentment towards this country is inevitable. The American business public does and will continue to sympathize and trade with the enemies of Germany. The supplies which the Allies can purchase in the United States may make the difference between ultimate defeat and ultimate victory. The Germans would be more than human not to resent such sympathy and assistance; and if at the present time they seem to be more than human in the exercise of military power, they are certainly very human indeed in the cultivation and in the expression of their feelings. This resentment cannot wholly be avoided, but it can at least be mitigated by a timely tribute of admiration for the extraordinary devotion of the German people to their national cause, and for the superb fight they are making against such enormous odds. It might also be mitigated by the assumption of a less self-righteous attitude on the part of American publicists, and a modification of their attempt to try Germany in the Supreme Court of civilization and find a verdict with damages against her. Such a verdict may have to be passed but what