

## Still Silent on the Twelve-Hour Day

LET us take stock of the force commonly called public opinion by measuring it against the persistence of the twelve-hour day in the steel industry. It is over four months now since the publication of the Interchurch Report on the steel strike with its condemnation of the autocratically enforced two-shift system in steel plants. Recently other waves of public criticism have broken against the twelve-hour day, one started by societies of engineers, the other by the Lockwood Committee's investigation. Results to date: silence from the owners of the industry; in the steel plants the now generally admitted inhuman schedule of hours for half the workers of an entire industry.

The Interchurch Report concerned itself with much more than the long hours. Commentators seem to consider it something of a critique of the American social-industrial system. It spoke out on the seven-day week, the under-payment of common labor, the hegemony of the United States Steel Corporation over the anti-union forces of the nation, the spy systems of great corporations, the often selfish irresponsibility of labor's leadership, the too frequently biased press, the too generally inert pulpit, denials of civil rights and the partisan anti-democratic acts of many government officers. It based its findings on months of investigation in the field by the commissioners and technicians. General public acceptance was accorded to the work, an approval emphasized weekly by the failure of the steel companies to meet the demands for a reply. Not for the purpose of boasting but as a matter of record we would cite the verdicts of authorities and public bodies in America and in Europe, the book itself bought by thousands of readers in every state, its use in colleges, also in churches, its widespread discussion in the press and in forums. We cite these because they prove that the uncontroverted report really made public opinion; we are asking how much that opinion is worth.

*It has not forced any public reasoned statistical formal answer from the steel companies. It has not drawn any reply from the accepted spokesmen of the United States Steel Corporation except one which I shall cite. It has not disturbed the twelve-hour day.*

Following the Interchurch Report the engineers spoke, basing their conclusions on an investigation made this fall. On December 3rd at a joint meeting of the Taylor Society, sections of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, Horace B.

Drury, economist, presented to an approving audience a detailed comparison of the twelve-hour vs. the eight-hour day. Insofar as the two reports cover the same ground, the engineers' report strikingly supplements that of the Interchurch World Movement. They too find the twelve-hour day still the habit of the industry, apparently related to the lack of labor unions, characterized by waste, demoralizing to the worker, generally hated by him, an anachronism which has passed from European plants. Going further, into twenty plants which adopted the eight-hour day, (mainly right after the 1919 strike), the engineers find that "taking it all in all, the manufacturers now operating on the shorter day are practically a unit in saying that it means more satisfactory operations and is better business. The experience of these twenty plants has revealed no real obstacles to putting the steel industry on a three-shift day." They find that "if all the departments were to be changed from two to three shifts the increase in total cost for the finished rail bar or sheet could not on the average be more than three per cent. But the increase need not be nearly so great. Some manufacturers going on eight hours have been able to reduce their force of men ten per cent, some more. . . . Others have found their rolling mill output going up twenty to twenty-five per cent. . . . The men have been so glad to get the shorter hours that they have been willing to make substantial concessions in daily wages."

And finally the engineers point out that this is a fine time for the Steel Corporation to do the inevitable because now there is so much unemployment!

Reaching the same conclusions, the engineers' tone, it will be observed, is very, very different from the churches'. We call for the abolition of the long day because it is inhuman and makes un-American citizens; we call for the maintenance of wages. The engineers urge that the shorter day is better business. Our report points out to Casabianca standing stiffly on the deck of the autocratic twelve-hour day that the deck is burning; the engineers sampling the rising flood of the eight-hour day call "Come on in; the water's fine; analysis indicates there is money in it." The two reports show the steel corporations not only reactionary but rather absurd.

No more than our report has the engineers' pronouncement broken the silence of the industry unless a certain pamphlet is intended to be the answer. Following our 275 pages of statistical analysis the Steel Corporation circulated a letter from a minister praising the Corporation's welfare work. Following the engineers the Corporation has made a booklet of another minister's address before a

Boston association. It is prefaced by a letter from the President of the United States Steel Corporation requesting permission to have it "widely circulated," saying "We are surprised that you, an entire stranger, should have taken the trouble to present the Interchurch World Report in its true light."

Excerpts from this booklet read:

The first mistake of the Interchurch Commission was its blind espousal of the principle of collective bargaining.

(Concerning the mediation effort of the Commission, suggesting to Mr. Gary a conference with his workers):

And now, with the innocence of teasing childhood the Interchurch Commission comes to ask for the seventh time the same question.

I am not surprised that Mr. Gary, in his courteous way, diverted the conversation and almost humorously toyed with them—a man of less grace would have shown his annoyance, for this must have seemed to him a supremely stupid performance on the part of our commission.

When we find a man like Mr. Gary, who is strong enough to resist all labor union compulsions and can keep his corporation free to adjust wages and labor conditions to the highest standard in the world, while keeping down the cost to the public, he is worth millions to us, and we ought to have had an Interchurch Commission clear-eyed enough to see it. . . .

Does anyone doubt the wisdom, justice and necessity of a spy system on the part of the United States Steel Corporation in sheer self-defense?

Such an "answer" has significance only for this reason: it bears the endorsement of the President of the United States Steel Corporation. Public opinion has brought forth this.

Finally the public has been stirred by the Lock-

wood investigation in New York. The admissions of the head of the Bethlehem company, the testimony of the head of the spy system for the National Erectors' Association, the revelations of an interlocking drive against labor centring in the Steel Corporation, the meaning of these things is recognized widely; for example editorially\* as follows:

The attitude of the steel-makers confirms everything charged against them last year at the time of the strike and since substantiated by the report of the Interchurch committee.

Thus the existence of an industrial autocracy which defies Congresses and snubs Presidents easily becomes a menace to great populations far removed from its thundering mills and squalid camps of imported labor. At great cost it suppressed the effort of its employees to better working conditions. We have yet to learn whether its power is to remain unbroken.

It is ten years since "public opinion" began to break against the twelve-hour day. With the recent history these questions are raised: How much are certain social forces really worth? Church and press are speaking more or less persistently; scientific business as represented by the engineers is speaking. If the industry holds silently to the twelve-hour day are we to infer that only labor unions in the steel industry can bring a change? Are we to infer that a main reason for not granting the change is the fear that it may redound to the furtherance of the unions? Far over 100,000 workers still rise in the dark, work twelve hours, go home in the dark, isolated in steel plants from family and nation. What may we expect the attitude of these to be toward the church, the press, the government and all else that constitutes "public opinion"—if only a great silence meets the cry of their bondage?

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## Russian Impressions

### V. The Armed Doctrine

**T**HERE are two ways of approaching the study of the Russian Revolution. One may treat it (as the preceding articles have treated it) as a local Russian phenomenon, which may be isolated, and considered as a deeply interesting chapter of Russian history. That, however, involves a false abstraction. One must not ignore the peculiarities, historical, economic and geographical of Russia's case. Her harsh and negligent despotism, her ability which has no parallel in western Europe to feed herself even under a blockade, the vast spaces which allow an unstable government to go on consolidating itself even under foreign attack—all these unique conditions go to explain the Revolution and its survival. None the less, the main

causes of the Revolution and some of its most characteristic features are common, in one degree or another, to most of Europe. Its primary cause was not so much that inevitable misery of the proletariat which Marx foresaw in the later phases of capitalist society, but a temporary misery due to the collapse and exhaustion of Russia's feeble and artificial industries, under the pressure of war and the German blockade. To this was added a moral cause, the disgust of the Russian people with a dynasty and a bureaucracy which had exposed its armies not merely to defeat but to disgrace.

In varying degrees these conditions—the decay of industry, the starvation of the urban population and the

\*New York World, December 15, 1920.