

# The New REPUBLIC

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## The Week

**P**RESIDENT HARDING'S proposal for the settlement of the coal strike gives rise to the hope that the administration has at last awakened to its industrial responsibilities. In spirit and in content the President's plan is just and wise. So far as the public interest permits, it is fair to both sides. If it leans somewhat toward the contentions of the miners, that is merely a consequence of the fact that the miners have the better case. It proposes the immediate resumption of mining on the old scales, in so far a victory for the miners, since the question at issue was the deflation of wages. But there is to be no interference with the mines now operated by non-union labor—a concession to the employers. The commission which is to be created will work out a scale for the industry as a whole—a heavy blow to the operators'

plan of state and district settlement. But the commission is to be composed of five representatives appointed by the President and only six others, three elected by the miners and three by the operators, and its majority decision will be final. That is within an ace of compulsory arbitration, and would not be welcomed by any body of organized labor. Finally, the commission is to investigate every phase of the industry, and reveal every cost of production and transportation. It is to make recommendations looking to the establishment of peace in the industry and the elimination of waste due to intermittency and instability. That would mean the end of the operators' plan for an industry run according to their own sweet will.

**FROM** the semi-official comment that issues from Washington and London, it appears plainly that the departments dealing with foreign affairs are taking the German crisis more seriously than the press or the general public. The press and public are chiefly interested in the next few months. Will there be a German revolution and an attempt to renew the European war before October? Almost certainly not. Then why trouble ourselves about those distressing possibilities? Departments of state, however, have to look ahead. And what they see ahead just now is ominous. Since 1918 the standing of the German republic has steadily sunk. The royalists on the one hand and the communists on the other have steadily increased in strength, at the expense of the moderates. German finance has gone down hill at a tremendously rapid rate, and German industry is headed for a crash, when the bottom drops entirely out of the currency. There is less hope now than at any time hitherto that the French government may gradually be brought around to a policy which will permit the German republic to live. All the facts, then, point to complications growing steadily toward a condition in which liquidation by revolution and a war of liberation will be inevitable. How soon the final crisis will come no one can safely predict. But it will come, unless America, England and Italy take a more vigor-

ous part than hitherto in the handling of the question of European peace.

**THE** French Chambers have absolved Poincaré from all responsibility for bringing on the last war. In future generations it is possible that historians may ascribe a trifle of weight to the vote of the Chambers. But they are more likely to find their energies absorbed in analyzing Poincaré's responsibility for the next war, or rather, for the next great plunge of Europe toward anarchy. It was the political menace of Poincaré that prevented Briand from joining with England in making common sense adjustments under which a republican Germany might live. In the interest of the profiteering industrials of the Creusot group Poincaré practically spiked the Rathenau-Loucheur agreement, by which the Germans would have been permitted to pay a substantial part of the indemnity in the only form in which they can pay it, their labor and industry. Poincaré killed the Genoa Conference and has succeeded in turning the Hague Conference toward futility. His record before 1914 might be lily-white—although it is not—and yet his chances would be excellent of being enrolled, alongside of the Kaiser, among the great architects of human woe.

**SUPERFICIALLY** nothing whatever is coming out of the conferences between the Russians and the western powers at the Hague, but underneath the surface many things appear to be taking place. The Russians want credits, and they do not care in the least where they come from, whether from the governments or from private individuals. They can get them in either case only on the security of concessions for the exploitation of national resources. The Hague Conference has given them an opportunity to spread on the counter all the concessions they have, and if the governments view the merchandise with jaundiced eye, that is not true of private interests. No actual bargains can be concluded so long as the conference lasts. But when it breaks up the British government will no longer be bound to restrain its nationals from doing business with Russia on their own risk. Possibly the British government might regard such an outcome with complacency.

**ABOUT** four years ago this week it became evident that the tide of the war had turned and the Germans were broken. At that time nearly everyone in the United States and a great many people in other parts of the world believed that this would be the last war; that it would be followed by the creation of a league of all the great nations on

earth, so powerful that no one would dare take up the sword without its consent. That was 1918; in the reality of 1922 we in America find the National Council for Reduction of Armaments laboriously cooperating with similar groups abroad to produce an anti-war demonstration on July 29th and 30th, just as though the Great Exemplar of 1914-18 had never been. In Paris a Temporary Mixed Commission of the existing League of Nations, on Reduction of Armaments, has just been sitting. This commission has been seeking for more than a year to secure information on existing armaments from about fifty countries, and admits that the results are highly discouraging. Even to the mild concrete proposal that military expenditures be kept at the 1921 level, more than thirty nations did not reply at all; and of the dozen which did only one, Belgium, agreed. The others were politely evasive. Whatever international power is exerted in Europe through agreement today does not reside in the League at Geneva but in the dying embers of Anglo-French accord. Nineteen-eighteen seems a long time ago.

**THE** "favorable" trade balance of the United States continues far greater than before the war, though the abnormal excess of exports over imports of 1916-1919 has been much reduced. In the latter year the difference amounted to \$4,000,000,000; while in the fiscal year just ended it was \$1,140,000,000. This is still much larger than the biggest favorable balance before the war, \$666,000,000 in 1918. It is 140 percent higher than in the fiscal year ending June 30, 1914, or 84 percent higher if the dollar of today be reckoned at a depreciated value of 60 cents. There can be very few persons so shortsighted as to feel today that a favorable balance of \$1,140,000,000 is something for America to rejoice over. We have far too much gold in our hands already for our own good or Europe's; even when we take into account the sale of foreign bond issues to American bankers and the purchase of European currency by speculators, it is something of a mystery how our foreign customers have managed to finance a billion dollars worth of purchases in the past twelve months. In the light of the trade balance, and the probable future effect of the tariff in making our imports even smaller, any discussion of how Europe is to pay us that famous eleven billion dollar debt becomes purely academic.

**THE** President has commuted the sentences of two of the members of the I. W. W. who were convicted of conspiracy under the Espionage act and were serving terms at Leavenworth. They are

Vincent St. John and Clyde Hough. The facts in connection with these men should be cited for their comment on the whole proceedings before Judge Landis at Chicago, as a result of which nearly one hundred men are still in prison. Vincent St. John was at one time secretary-treasurer of the I. W. W. In 1915 he severed his connection entirely with the organization and took up mining in Arizona. Nevertheless, he was among those arrested in 1917, tried, convicted, and sentenced to ten years at Leavenworth. Clyde Hough was secretary of the I. W. W. local at Rockford, Illinois. He was a conscientious objector and as such surrendered to the authorities and was sentenced to one year in prison, where he was when the Espionage act was passed, and the alleged conspiracy took place. Nevertheless, he was placed on trial with his alleged fellow conspirators. He was given no opportunity to testify in his own behalf, and among the four hundred verdicts rendered by the jury in less than a half hour, were four against Hough. It seems incredible that such miscarriage of justice could have taken place before a federal judge. Were Shelley to write his *Masque of Anarchy* today Judge Landis would deserve a place in that sorry procession with Eldon and Castlereagh.

"PARIS murders laid to spies of Soviet. Traces found of a secret council which kills agents who disobey. Kerensky papers stolen. Investigation after theft discloses that two were killed by poisoned tea." That is the story told in the headlines of a New York Times Paris dispatch of July 10. One shudders. So the Soviets have become an international murder gang? We expected it. But no, the text of the story disillusion us. It wasn't the spies of the Soviet who did the murdering. They happened to be the persons murdered. The murderers were Whites, of the Kerensky persuasion. The "secret council," if it exists, is white, not red.

## Railway Arbitration Fails

THE strike of the railway shopmen demonstrates the fallacy of the theory by which, under the Transportation act, the Railroad Labor Board was constituted. In theory the Board protects the interests of all by including equal representation of employees, employers and "the public." In theory it is segregated from the financial and commercial aspects of railroad management, and sets wages and working conditions according to certain "principles" assumed to be

just, and vaguely defined in the Transportation act. In theory either party has a right to reject its decisions, which, however, are expected to prevail by virtue of the moral support of "public opinion." As a matter of practice, each item of this theory has been shown to be either unjust or unworkable or both.

In the first place, the representation is not really representative. All members are appointed by the President. Although the wishes of unions and railroads are usually consulted, at least one of the present "labor" representatives is not the candidate of the majority of the unions. The representatives of the public are nominated in the ordinary routine of political administration, and it is pure luck if they happen to be competent. And "the public," unlike the unions and managements, is not an organized interest with defined aims which can be represented, but an abstraction in the minds of those whom the President happens to nominate. It cannot be canvassed by a strike vote. It cannot assemble in directors' meetings. The representatives of the public, in reaching decisions, do not represent anything except their own understanding, emotions and prejudices, and they act rather as umpires between two real and bitterly contending forces.

Do we not expect judges to perform very much the same functions? But the analogy is a false one. We possess generally accepted and broad principles of legal justice. We have elaborate codes of legislation and stacks of precedents. Judges are professional experts, trained in school and by practice for their duties. And lawsuits do not arise, as a rule, between exactly the same two groups of opposing interests year after year. In spite of these faulty safeguards against the personal equation, the decisions of courts of law in cases where the economic interests of large classes are involved are notoriously unsatisfactory, though they do command a grudging acceptance. But we are not agreed on the principles of industrial justice. The brief bases of wage-determination enunciated in the Transportation act are so vague as to be susceptible in specific instances of diametrically opposing interpretations. The public appointees have almost no professional training for their duties. Seated in their empty eminence, these three men have to divide the proceeds of the railroad industry between employees and owners, thus affecting intimately the lives of two million men and their families, and the millions of dollars of stockholders' income. The result is that their decisions are not based upon any recognizable or accepted principles, but reflect in the main their sense of what is expected of them by