



INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS JOURNAL

VOL. V. No. 3/4

MARCH-APRIL 1944

Published by the
International Transport
Workers' Federation,
Bedford, England.

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Great Social Changes Needed

BY JAMES ROBERTS

Mr. James Roberts, president of the New Zealand Labour Party, has written a challenging article for The Standard, the official organ of his Party, from which we reproduce below the greater part. Mr. Roberts holds a long and honourable record in the I.T.F. as the former secretary-treasurer of the New Zealand Waterside Workers' Union for more than a quarter of a century.

NUMEROUS books have been written and more numerous speeches made dealing with after-war problems, all of which more or less incline towards retaining wholly or in part all the present social conditions with such amendments as may be deemed necessary to give social security, improved living standards and a better cultural level.

If the trade union movement desires to have a new social order, it must play its part and accept its responsibility to perform the work of production and distribution, and render the services required by the nation. We know that in the past the employing class has denied the trade unions that responsibility, but recently there has been an inclination on their part—indeed, a demand in some instances—that the workers should accept this responsibility, but, of course, when this demand was made there was little or no recognition by way of increased payment or higher living standards conceded to the workers for their industrial effort and organization which is in the main responsible for increased production.

On the other hand, the average trade union has up to the present refused to accept any responsibility for either the organization or direction of matters affecting production, distribution and services.

No one can blame them for that. The plain truth is that for years they have been denied it, and have, therefore, turned their attention towards fighting their immediate employer on the job, and off it through their industrial organizations and, indeed, by the limited means in their power.

A decade has not passed since the time when it would have been against the immediate material interests of the wage worker to carry on production efficiently, for if, less than ten years ago, the workers had increased production through their efforts, it very often meant dismissals because more goods were produced than could be purchased by the employed and unemployed workers due to lack of buying power, and it is now a well-established fact that this has been the primary cause in every country of the recent world-wide slump.

Living Standards. There is no subject about which there is so much talk and which is so little understood as living standards. To the average worker higher wages means a higher living standard. To the shopkeeper higher prices mean a higher living standard. To the producer, whether he is farmer or factory

owner, higher wholesale prices mean to him a higher living standard; but as the labour required to produce and distribute goods must be paid for at a higher price, it frequently follows that, though the producer's price is higher, his standard of living is not improved.

It is the same with the distributor and the shop-keeper; if he pays higher wages and the prices of goods are higher, the turnover is generally smaller, and he will find that his outgoing expenses, or the price he pays to carry on his business, do not enable him to have a higher living standard.

The worker whose wages have been increased, say, 10 per cent, has often added to the necessities of life, not 10 per cent, but 15 per cent, and while it may give workers with no dependants a somewhat higher living standard it invariably lowers the living standard of the family man—the man who matters most.

It is only through increased production and better organization in the distribution of goods when they are produced and in giving better service to the people that we can have a really higher living standard. By what means can the worker obtain his share?

Archaic System. There can be no denying that our present industrial system is archaic. If a group of men and women are producing boots, for instance, and they increased production in normal times by 20 per cent, and this increase was carried on correspondingly in all factories, within twelve months, as sure as day follows night, 20 per cent of the operatives would be dismissed because there would be a surplus of boots on the market which could not find a purchaser.

The same could be said of clothing and, indeed, of practically all those commodities (except primary products which we export) that go to make up the necessities of life. It is at this point that the trade union movement must take a stand. The productive capacity of the workers, if it is increased, should go to the workers.

If there were proper co-operation in industrial production between the operatives, who are most important, and capital, which after all matters little nowadays, these workers could go on increasing production year after year, and it would mean that the people would have more boots and better boots, more and better clothing and the hundred and one other things required, and if in the end the operatives, say, in a boot factory could produce in a forty-hour week more than were required, their services could be rewarded by allowing shorter hours, more leisure time, annual holidays and other amenities which would retain the workers in a higher state of physical efficiency. It will be impossible to obtain this unless there is a complete change in ownership and control in the agencies of production and distribution.

Co-operation. Unfortunately the workers of New Zealand have never been trained in the commercial side of business. There is no reason why they should not be; indeed we have found from experience that wherever an opportunity in this direction is offered, men and women become very keen business people and show excellent adaptability.

The time has passed when a meeting of the board of

OUR NEW TITLE PAGE

This is the first issue of the "International Transport Workers' Journal" to appear with a new heading. The change was made at the request of the publishers of a British journal devoted to transport affairs who found that the resemblance to the heading of their journal was too close to exclude confusion. Mr. John Woods' design gives our journal a stamp indisputably its own. We hope it will please our readers.

directors should be able to demand of the operatives in a factory certain services without consultation. It has been proved over and over again, particularly since the war, that in factories where the workers are consulted, production has increased two-fold and three-fold. In factories where the workers were driven from the top, production did not increase until works councils or works committees were formed, and the actual men and women who operated the tools of production were allowed to express their opinions.

The waterfront industry has for the past two years been operated under the control of a Commission appointed by the Government (Mr. Roberts occupies the post of Waterfront Control Commissioner—Ed.). The work was taken over on the basis of the cost of handling cargoes to and from ships three years ago—in most cases slightly below the actual cost.

It is admitted that at first the waterside workers were prone in many cases to fight the Commission in almost the same manner as they fought the shipowners the years down. One could not expect a complete change-over in a week or two or a month or two.

To-day, however, most waterfront trade unionists show a definite desire towards co-operation. The service given is far better, and overseas ships which were on the coast of New Zealand loading and discharging in the days gone by for thirty-five days on an average are now discharged and loaded in from fifteen to sixteen days on an average. This has been brought about solely by the co-operative contract system, and centralization of shipping also.

There are several ports in New Zealand to-day at which the men are engaged, supervised and discharged by officers of the trade union. The work at all these ports is far better than at ports where the engagement and supervision of labour is carried on under the direction of the shipowners. The discipline is better, for the simple reason that it is union discipline or self-discipline. Indeed the waterside workers have a great responsibility given to them, for if this system is successful on the waterfront it will, as a matter of course, be introduced into other industries.

Some Questions. For the time being the trade union movement of New Zealand should concentrate its efforts *inter alia* on the following:

Will the trade unions accept the responsibility of producing more goods and rendering more efficient service, and thereby improve living standards?

Would not the system of co-operative production applied to industry, where this can be done, be more

TOWARDS AN INTERNATIONAL SEAFARERS' CHARTER

By O. BECU

General Secretary, Belgian Merchant Navy Officers' Union

Many attempts were made by seafarers' organizations in the years before the war to bring about on the one hand an improvement in their members' wages and working conditions, and on the other to arrive at international unification of seafarers' standards. Far more than any other industry, shipping is an international activity. It might, therefore, have been logically expected that this would be reflected in a recognition by all concerned of the need for international regulation of the industry. As far as seafarers' conditions are concerned, however, anything resembling international regulation is completely lacking.

Another feature of seamen's conditions is that so far it has not been possible to raise them to anything like the same level as shore workers' conditions. At first sight this may seem peculiar, seeing that generally speaking the seamen of most nations possess strong trade unions. The explanation may be summed up as follows :

(1) In most countries seamen are numerically too weak to be able to influence public opinion or the legislature. In practically all cases they are deprived of the franchise while absent from the home country, so that normally their political influence is negligible.

(2) Shipowners have always been extremely conservative, both in national and international affairs. Where it suited them, they have clung tenaciously to the numerous traditions of the maritime industry and every improvement in the social sphere and even in the sphere of safety at sea has had to be wrested from them by grim struggle.

(3) The international character of the industry has been exploited to the disadvantage of the seamen.

Let us go a little more closely into the latter point, about the shipowners' exploitation of the international character of the shipping industry. Shipowners have tended to see in the international character of shipping an opportunity for gaining a competitive advantage over their rivals. This led to a competitive struggle which often has been murderous, especially in periods of depression, and has been fought with the weapon of low wages, long hours, bad conditions, less manning. One of the results of this again has been that professional efficiency, instead of being an asset to the seamen, became a serious handicap owing to the shipowners' constant concern to reduce labour costs. In the struggle which seamen's unions have waged in the different countries, the exigencies of international competition has been one of the main arguments of the shipowners.

This experience demonstrated that the question of a

efficient and give to the worker a better return for his labour, and more goods and better services than can be obtained by the existing methods ?

Has the time arrived when the trade union movement should take its rightful place in industry, i.e. its responsibility to produce goods and render service for the people of the nation ?

reasonable standard of life for seafarers could only be solved by international regulation of conditions of employment. But although the seafarers were united in strong international organizations, e.g. the International Transport Workers' Federation, this approach also made little headway before the war. Numerous attempts made through the International Labour Office were indeed anything but successful. Shipowners proved as reluctant on the international plane as on the national to establish conditions giving a fair deal to seamen.

The seamen's realization of this state of affairs has become more acute during the war than ever before. Their struggle against Fascism, the innumerable and indescribable sacrifices they have made, their daily contacts with comrades of other nationalities, the establishment of most of their trade unions in one and the same country, all these facts have accentuated their feelings of international solidarity. Never, indeed, have they had such a clear right to demand decent wages and working conditions. Realization of the community of interests of the seamen of all nations and of the corollary that international action alone offers prospects of advancement, led to the holding of a Joint International Seafarers' Conference in London on 13th and 15th December last, which decided that an International Seafarers' Charter should be drawn up.

A draft of such a Charter was prepared by a Joint Committee of the International Transport Workers' Federation and the International Mercantile Marine Officers' Association and discussed at a second Joint International Seafarers' Conference held in London on 31st March and 1st April last. At this conference twenty-three organizations of merchant navy officers and seamen were represented by fifty-two delegates of twelve different nationalities—Belgium, China, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Greece, Holland, India, Jugoslavia, Norway, Poland and Sweden.

The draft before the conference contained a comprehensive programme of post-war demands of the seamen regarding a wide range of subjects—wages, bonuses, overtime, continuous employment, entry, training, promotion, hours and manning, annual paid leave, social insurance, accommodation, hygiene and medical services, safety, recognition of seafarers' organizations, etc. All these questions were the subject of demands which were fully discussed at the conference. Although there were differences of opinion on points of detail, complete unanimity prevailed on every question of principle. This unanimity was especially marked on the necessity of concerted international action. In the words of the general secretary of the I.T.F., J. H. Oldenbroek, the seamen propose to realize their aims "by negotiation and with the assistance of the I.L.O. if possible, but without the I.L.O. if necessary."

It was also clearly stated as the emphatic opinion of the officers' and seamen's unions, that the system of free

enterprise is not conducive to a successful operation of an international industry like shipping. Further that they consider it to be in the best interests of the world co-operation and of the national communities, as well as of the seafaring community, that merchant shipping should be an object of constant public attention and of international consultation and agreement between Governments, through an international agency on which managements and seafarers should be represented through their international organizations.

It was decided to refer the draft back to the Joint

Committee to be revised and that a further Joint International Seafarers' Conference should be held in the near future to decide the final text. Mention may also be made of a suggestion put forward at the conference by the representative of the French officers in favour of merging the two Internationals of seafarers into one organization. Finally it is interesting to report a suggestion of the representative of the Belgian seamen that after the war there should be in all important ports of the world trade union representatives charged with the task of aiding officers and seamen of all nations.

NEW REGIME FOR MEXICAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

An emergency decree of President Avila Camacho, dated 9th March, 1944, adds another change of regime to the many the Mexican National Railways have undergone of recent years. The new change, however, seems to have been dictated by special difficulties arising out of war-time conditions, and it is provided that it will cease to operate "as soon as the conditions created by the state of war, and those which may be the consequence of it after the war is over, disappear."

The Mexican railways have long been suffering from the results of destruction and neglect during the revolutionary period, and subsequent exploitation by foreign capitalist interests completely indifferent to the welfare of the country. When they were expropriated by a decree of President Cardenas, on 23rd June, 1937, they were in a bankrupt and almost derelict state. Government administration failed to put them in order, and a little under a year later, on 1st May, 1938, the bold experiment was made of handing them over to the management of the Railway Workers' Union of the Mexican Republic. The results were an improvement in some respects, but taken as a whole the experiment was not a success, chiefly for financial reasons. Saddled with an enormous burden of debt, with tracks and rolling stock in an extremely bad state of repair, and with the obligation to hand over to the Government 5.64 per cent of gross revenue, the task proved too great, and on 6th January, 1941, the trade union administration ended, and the railways were handed over to a public corporation created specially for the purpose. It was a tribute to the workers that the Articles of the new body provided that three out of the seven members of its Board of Directors should be appointed by the Union, and that the General Manager under the Workers' Administration was one of the four chosen to represent the Government.

Under the new regime which, as already mentioned, is to be purely a war-time one: almost dictatorial powers are conferred upon the General Manager, who is appointed by the President of the Republic. The Board of Directors is abolished, and replaced by an Advisory Council of nine members, four Government representatives appointed one each by the Ministers of Finance, Communications, Agriculture and Labour, two employers' representatives appointed one each by two confederations of chambers of commerce and industry, and two labour representatives appointed by the Executive and Vigilance committees of the Railwaymen's

Union. Employers' and labour representatives can be recalled at any time by the organizations appointing them.

The change of regime seems not to have been unconnected with divisions within the Mexican Railwaymen's Union, which came to a crisis at the time of the election of a new Executive in January of this year. Matters were well on the way to settlement as a result of the intervention of the President of the Republic, at the request of the contending parties, when new difficulties arose. On 10th February, the President proposed that a coalition Executive should be elected, in which the three main factions would be represented by new men. The proposal was accepted, and the new Executive took over four days later, the President himself appointing a new General Secretary, but at the end of February a number of branches, mainly of trainmen and firemen, broke away, taking with them—according to their own statement—something like 15,000 members, and starting a new union. Both the Railwaymen's Union and the Mexican Workers' Confederation raised objections to the new regime, but the weakness caused by internal divisions prevented them from making their protests effective.

The President has promised that the change shall not involve any dismissal of personnel, nor affect the fundamental conditions which have been won by the railway workers, but it inevitably weakens the Union's position, as all supervisory personnel will be chosen in future by the Manager instead of by the Board upon which the Union was represented, while a further clause in the decree provides that such personnel may no longer belong to the Union.

On the other hand, in his statement of the reasons for issuing the decree, the President takes up the cudgels against bourgeois attempts to saddle the railwaymen with all the blame for the country's transport difficulties. He points out that there has been, during the war, an enormous increase in railway traffic—it has more than doubled in four years—that rolling stock and equipment is notoriously inadequate; and that the lines are in very bad condition; and further states that "it is necessary that the Nation should understand that the great majority of the organized workers on the railways deserve all honour for their capacity, their work, and their devotion, not only to the undertaking, but to the country as a whole."

THE HIRTENBERG ARMS SMUGGLING CASE

By **BERTHOLD KOENIG**

General Secretary of the former Austrian Railwaymen's Union

In spite of the successes of the Social Democrats at the polls, or possibly even because of it, Austria took, from the year 1927 onwards—under bourgeois governments supported by a very small bourgeois majority, with the Christian Social Party in the leadership—the road to fascist dictatorship, which in February, 1934, became a reality under Federal Chancellor Dollfuss, a personal friend of Mussolini's. As outwardly the pretence of a democratically ruled land was maintained, there were frequent tragicomic interludes which would have revealed the real nature of the Government's policy had they been properly understood and appreciated. The Hirtenberg arms smuggling case was one such episode.

Dollfuss came into power in 1932, as representative of the Christian Social Party, and as this party was not strong enough to ensure by itself a Parliamentary majority, it formed a coalition with the Landbund (Agrarian Union) and the Heimwehr (Fascist Guard) Party. The latter party was outspokenly fascist, and although it only represented a small minority of about 5 per cent in Parliament, it forced upon Dollfuss—who was by no means unwilling—measures avowedly directed against the Social Democratic Workers' Party, which had behind it close on 45 per cent of Austria's voters. Dollfuss' foreign policy was based on the support of Mussolini, who at that time was still definitely anti-German, and was glad to have a buffer state in the Danube basin to protect his northern flank. The relations between Dollfuss and Mussolini were those of a vassal to his overlord. The programme of the Heimwehr was definitely fascist, partly on the lines of the Blackshirts and partly on those of the Nazis.

After the signature of the Versailles Treaty Austria and Hungary were only allowed to have very small armies, and their stocks of arms were limited in proportion. The other Succession States of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, were accepted as allies of the Western Powers and parties to the Versailles Treaty. Mussolini's foreign policy was also openly directed against Yugoslavia, as he regarded this country as a menace to his north-eastern frontier and Adriatic coastline. For this Hungary, the oldest post-war dictatorship in Europe, was the most suitable partner, and Austria under Dollfuss the most suitable intermediary. But with a small army and few arms Hungary was useless to Mussolini's plans. So something had to be done about it.

At the beginning of 1933 the load of a wagon booked through from Italy to Hungary, which had reached Innsbruck via the Brenner Pass, had to be transferred to another, as an axle was running hot. The contents were described as machine parts. While the work was going on one of the cases broke open, and the railwaymen doing the job saw that it contained machine-gun parts. These men, who belonged to the Austrian Railwaymen's

Union, immediately reported their discovery to the leaders of the Social Democratic Party in Vienna, who printed the whole story in the *Arbeiterzeitung*. In the meantime the wagons loaded with arms had reached Hirtenberg, where their contents were to be transferred to motor lorries and taken across the Hungarian frontier. The French and British governments promptly protested through their ambassadors in Vienna, and demanded the return of the wagons to Italy. Dollfuss promised everything, but except that the Social Democrats were accused, in the bourgeois papers, of having committed high treason by revealing the affair, nothing was done about it. Dollfuss suddenly discovered that the arms were really not intended for Hungary, but had been sent, as a kindly thought of Mussolini's, for the purpose of helping Austria with her unemployment problem, to be repaired at the Hirtenberg cartridge factory of Herr Fritz Mandl, financier and patron of the Heimwehr. But the ambassadors of the Western Powers urgently pressed their demands for the return of the arms to Italy, and Dollfuss' position became critical.

One day early in February, 1933—I was at the time General Secretary of the Austrian Railwaymen's Union—I was invited by Herr Seefehlner, General Manager of the Austrian State Railways, to see him in his office. When I arrived he immediately made me a proposal. He said that since the Western Powers insisted on the return of the arms, they would once more be loaded in wagons destined for Italy. They would be duly and publicly sealed, and everything would look as though the demand was to be fulfilled. The wagons would then be pulled out of the factory, but somewhere on the way to Italy, in some station near the frontier, by night or in a fog, they would be drawn into a siding, opened, unloaded, once more sealed, and sent on to Italy empty, while the arms would be transferred to already prepared empty wagons and taken on to Hungary. My job would be to use my influence to induce the men required for the manipulation to agree to the plan. The reward for my help, any sum of money I cared to mention, could be used in any way which I thought fit.

I had to do some quick thinking. Had I turned down the offer brusquely and indignantly I should have been complimented and shown out, and as I had no witnesses there would have been nothing to do but to forget the matter, as nobody would have believed in the possibility of such an enormity. But I wanted to expose the whole iniquitous business, and thought I saw an opportunity to reveal to the world the real character and hypocrisy of the Dollfuss Government in Austria. So I signified that I was not unwilling, but wanted time to think the matter over and find the necessary helpers. Secretly agreed, and I went straight to the Parliament House to meet Seitz, the Chairman of the Party, Dr. Otto Bauer and Dr. Robert Danneberg, whom I had invited there to hear

an important communication, and informed them of Seefehlner's attempt at bribery. From the bearing of my friends, who looked at me with unbelief rather than astonishment in their faces, I could see how preposterous my communication must have sounded. I told them, however, that I would let them have a proof of my statements, and I called one of the Social Democratic Parliamentary secretaries to a telephone with a double receiver, where he could hear the conversation I proposed to hold and take it all down in shorthand. All others present went with us to the telephone. I called up Seefehlner and told him that I agreed in principle to his proposal, but asked him to repeat his plan in detail and state the amount he would be willing to give me for my co-operation. I cannot now recall whether he said that I could have whatever I wished, or whether he then proposed 200,000 Austrian shillings for each consignment, but in any case he repeated the whole plan over the telephone, and stood thus convicted.

There was great excitement, and the leaders of the Party, rather hastily, decided to send a deputation to Dollfuss to have it out with him. Seitz and Danneberg were appointed as delegates, and they duly went to see Dollfuss and raised the matter. He cunningly pretended to be indignant, thanked them for the information, threw all the blame on to Seefehlner, who he said had acted without his knowledge, and dismissed him from his position as General Manager of the Austrian State Railways. Seefehlner was naturally sacrificed with his own consent, and probably not without substantial compensation, but Dollfuss, at any rate, was outwardly cleared of all blame. I thought at the time, and still think, that we should have raised the matter immediately in Parliament, so that it would have become public in

Austria and throughout the world. In that case Dollfuss, unprepared, would have stood convicted of complicity, and his Government would have been brought down.

Mussolini and Dollfuss never forgave the crossing of their plans, and they decided on the destruction of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, the trade unions and other Social Democratic institutions. In this, in the course of the year 1933, culminating in the events of February 1934, they were successful. As an indication of the importance which Yugoslavia attributed to the holding up of the transport of arms it may be said that the Faculty of Law of the University of Subotica, in Yugoslavia, decided to put me forward as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize. At about the same time the Heimwehr Party of Prince Starhemberg, the friend of Fritz Mandl, put me on the list of persons to be murdered when the Fascists should seize power. This appeared from documents discovered later. The only thing that saved my life was the fact that I managed to escape arrest on 12th February 1934, remaining under cover in Vienna until 2nd March, so that I could meet trustworthy trade union and Party friends. Czechoslovakian comrades then smuggled me over the frontier, after which the Government issued a decree depriving me of my Austrian nationality. The organized railwaymen of Austria were robbed of all the social advances they had won by five decades of hard fighting, and their leaders were imprisoned and dismissed from the service with loss of all pension rights.

My one wish now is to see the banner of the Austrian Railwaymen's Union, which I handed over to the custody of the I.T.F. at its Copenhagen Congress (1935) once more floating proudly in free Red Vienna.

A COMMON PURPOSE FOR LABOUR

By A. R. MOSHER

President of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees and other Transport Workers

Unless the workers of Canada become aroused to the necessity of an all-out effort on both the economic and political fronts, the freedoms for which our Armed Forces are fighting on the battlefronts of the world and for which we have been working and paying on the home front, will not be realized. By the combined efforts of our fighting forces abroad and working forces at home, we will undoubtedly win a victory over the Axis powers which have plunged the world into a test of armed strength and a blood-bath unequalled in the history of the world, but that does not necessarily mean that we shall win freedom to use the resources of the earth to meet the needs of the people.

Let us not be lulled into a fool's paradise by soothsayers and demagogues. We have serious problems to be solved, and definite action must be taken if we are going to put an end to poverty in the presence of actual and potential plenty. We need no better evidence of the necessity for unity among the forces of Labour than the unhappy and degrading experience of many thousands of workers during the depression years which brought

despair to every community throughout the Dominion.

The Failure of Private Enterprise. The condition which prevailed was not the result of unwillingness on the part of the workers to produce, or a lack of resources, machinery or technical skill. Everything necessary to supply the normal requirements of every citizen of Canada was available, but we did not approach the problem in an intelligent manner, and we suffered the consequences. Private enterprise, so-called, failed to measure up to its responsibility. If, as is now claimed, it can operate to meet the requirements of the people on a fair and equitable basis, there should be no delay in making known how it proposes to do it.

In view of the failure of private enterprise to meet our peace-time needs, and ample evidence that it was so wholly incapable of meeting war-time requirements that even a reactionary Government, composed of the staunch supporters of the present economic system, found it necessary to take over control of the economic system and plan its activities, what ground is there for the hope that future performance will justify its con-

tinuation? No change of heart or of practice is apparent.

Where are the Plans? If the champions and defenders of the present system have plans for the post-war period which will ensure the use of the human and material resources to provide the highest possible standard of living for all who are willing to contribute, according to their ability, in the production and distribution of the required goods and services, let them produce such plans. The common people are not particular as to who develops the best and most comprehensive plan; all they want is the necessary guarantee that the best plan will be put into effect.

There had to be planning to prosecute the war as successfully as we have done up to the present time. No one claims that the planning was perfect, but, on the other hand, no one can successfully argue that private enterprise, uncontrolled and driven solely by the profit motive, would or could have accomplished anything like what has been done. Since economic planning and control of industry have enabled us to meet the demand for the vast requirements of war, and at the same time meet civilian needs to a greater extent than before the war, is it not conclusively evident that economic planning and control of industry will enable us to meet peace-time requirements more abundantly than ever?

The Way of Co-operation. Freedom to roam the streets and highways, to stand in the bread line, or to join the soup kitchen parade, is not the kind of freedom for which we are working and fighting. What has the government of the day to offer, to ensure that we shall be better off at the conclusion of the present war than we were at the conclusion of the last war?

As a matter of self-preservation, Labour must insist upon the co-operative use of the resources and facilities at our disposal, in order that the needs of all can be taken care of to the extent of our ability to produce after the artificial barriers created by the private profit system have been removed. Industry, or at least those basic industries which must be operated to meet the essential requirements of the people, can no longer be left to function or cease to function at the discretion of a few individuals whose sole interest in the industry is financial benefit for themselves. The production of homes, fuel, clothing and food, for example, must not depend on the profit-incentive, but on the need for them. There should be no shortage through any cause save physical inability to produce through lack of the necessary material, skill and equipment.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to visualize a society in which people can co-operate to provide for themselves the goods and services they require, so long as the natural resources and the machinery of production are owned and controlled by a relatively small number of persons, who can collect tribute from all who use them or who can, if they wish, decline to allow them to be used: hence the necessity for socialization or common ownership. Those who own and can thereby collect payment from others for the use of such resources and machinery are not at all likely to contribute either resources or labour upon an equal basis with non-owners to meet the needs of all. Co-operation can be successful only to the

extent that equality exists between the co-operators.

More Private Property for Workers. Those, therefore, who have no other means of earning a livelihood for themselves and their dependants except by working for it, must co-operate politically to make secure the right to work, and to use in co-operation with all other willing workers, the natural resources and the machinery of production by which goods and services may be provided. It cannot be properly implied that co-operation for such purpose involves what is glibly referred to as regimentation, or the denial of private ownership. In fact, it is the reverse, inasmuch as it provides the means whereby private ownership of a home to live in, of food, clothing and other essentials, will be made available to millions who now own nothing, and never will own anything because others own beyond their needs, and withhold from use resources which they are incapable of using.

To say that democratically adopted rules to ensure equality of opportunity to produce and use the products of our labour will involve regimentation, is nonsense, and the term is used solely to arouse fear and prevent people from taking the steps which will lead to a co-operative social order.

The Issue before the People. Stripped of all window dressing, the situation with which we are confronted is simply this. Canada has natural resources far beyond the needs of her people, and has or can make the equipment necessary to provide in abundance practically all their material requirements. The workers, given the opportunity, are willing and anxious to produce the goods and services required, to an extent far beyond that which has ever been accomplished, even in war-time. All they ask is that we agree upon rules which will ensure equitable distribution. What is wrong with this demand? What reason can be advanced against using available resources to meet our needs? How can these resources be used successfully for this purpose, except upon a co-operative basis, and how can real co-operation on a national scale be put into practice under the present profit system?

No defender of the present system has so far done more than to say we can have full employment at good wages and a high standard of living for all, without departure from the profit system. They have been saying that for a long time, but how it can be done has never been explained.

Unless it can now be shown that some new discovery has been made whereby the present system can meet all requirements in spite of its failure after many years of trial, is it not logical that we should try some other system? In my opinion, we ought to be willing to try any new system suggested that offers any hope whatever of improvement. In any event, there should be no further loss of time in deciding on some course of action, and everyone who believes he has some constructive suggestion to offer should not hesitate to make it now. It may, and no doubt will, be ridiculed as every other suggestion has been by those who have nothing to offer themselves, but that should not deter us. Something must be done, and the time to do it is NOW!

From the Canadian Unionist, Journal of the Canadian Congress of Labour.

THE STORY OF U.S.A. RAILROAD WAGE NEGOTIATIONS

By **BERT M. JEWELL**

Chairman, National Committee of the Fifteen Co-operating Railway Labor Organizations of the U.S.A.

Wages on the railways to-day are far below wages paid for comparable work in manufacturing industry. In July, 1943 (latest figure) average hourly earnings on railroads were 74 cents compared to 96 cents in manufacturing industries, a difference of 22 cents. Figures for minimum wages show that while three-fourths of the minimum rates in national industries were above 70 cents per hour, 104,000 railway workers received 46 cents an hour or less, and 412,000¹ received less than 60 cents an hour. Because of these low wages, labour turn-over was close to 100 per cent, accident rate rose to 50 per cent in two years, service was seriously impaired, transportation of war goods hindered.

The non-operating railway employees² began their negotiations with the carriers in September, 1942, asking for a wage increase of 20 cents an hour and a minimum wage of 70 cents an hour. Being unable to reach an agreement, on 7th January, 1943, they asked for mediation of their dispute by the National Mediation Board, according to established procedure under the Railway Labor Act. Mediation failed, and no agreement was reached. The next step under Railway Labor Act procedure was to ask for appointment of an Emergency Board to examine the facts, and this request was made by the unions on 20th January. The Board was appointed on 20th February; hearings began 1st March and continued until 7th May. Factual evidence on every phase of the railway wage problem was covered; the record filled 6,338 pages. On the basis of this evidence, the Board recommended a wage increase of 8 cents per hour for all employees in the seventy-three classes covered by the fifteen non-operating unions, presenting its report to the President on 24th May.

In a conference on 27th May, the President urged the railway unions to accept this award. Although they recognized its inadequacy, the unions agreed to accept it because of the national emergency. They understood from this conference that the award was acceptable to the President and that a means of adjusting overtime pay would be worked out later (Overtime pay on railroads begins after forty-eight hours, compared to forty hours in industry).

The unions then made arrangements with the carriers to meet with them on 24th June and negotiate an agreement containing the 8 cent wage increase. On 23rd June, however, Stabilization Director Vinson issued an order that this recommended increase "shall not become effective." The unions later found that on 9th June, without their knowledge, the Carriers' Conference Committee had filed a brief with Mr. Vinson urging that the recommendations of the Emergency Board be disapproved. Mr. Vinson took this arbitrary action without conference with the unions.

¹ Out of a total of about 1,300,000 railwaymen.—*Editor.*

² The "operating railway employees" are the locomotive engineers and firemen, conductors (passenger guards), trainmen (goods guards) and switchmen.—*Editor.*

After that, the unions conferred with the President, War Mobilization Director Byrnes and Mr. Vinson, trying to preserve the understanding they had with the President. Representatives of the unions and the carriers met with Mr. Vinson on 3rd August and arranged for a conference of the Carriers Conference Committee and the Employees Conference Committee on 6th August. An agreement was signed on 7th August, providing a general increase of 8 cents per hour retroactive to 1st February, 1943. This agreement fully implemented the understandings with the President and other government representatives, but they were unwilling to give formal approval to it, and without approval the carriers were unwilling to carry it out. Government officials objected to a uniform increase of 8 cents per hour.

The unions then met again with the President on 16th September. He insisted that the lower paid groups must have a higher increase, and in order to reach an understanding that day the unions agreed. A minimum of 56 cents was to be established and increases tapered off to 7 cents an hour for higher paid employees. They also understood that the President would co-operate with them in getting legislation on overtime pay. The unions then submitted a scale complying with this arrangement.

On 17th September the unions were informed that the President wished to postpone action until the Emergency Board handling the case of the operating employees³ made its report. This report was filed on 25th September, recommending a wage increase of 4 cents. The fifteen non-operating unions immediately requested a conference with the President and met with him on 12th October, when they were informed that the increase of 7 cents for higher paid employees, provided in their understanding of 16th September, must be reduced to 4 cents. The unions stated that this was wholly unacceptable to them.

On 16th October the President issued an Executive Order setting up a Special Emergency Board to reconsider the wage claims of the non-operating employees; it was authorized to consider the increase granted the operating employees. The Executive Order specifically stated that recommendations of the Board should become effective fifteen days after filing unless vetoed by the Economic Stabilization Director. On the same day Mr. Vinson issued an opinion pointing out that the 4 cents awarded the operating employees was the maximum due them and that increases to the non-operating employees should bear a fair relation to those of the operating employees.

The unions felt that any recommendation acceptable to Mr. Vinson would not be satisfactory to their members as a substitute for the 7th August agreement. They felt also that their agreement of 7th August was a legally binding and enforceable contract.

After proceeding in accordance with law, in strict

³ The Brotherhoods conducting wage negotiations for the operating railway employees had taken separate though parallel action.—*Editor.*

regard for the national emergency for more than one year, after seeing the recommendations of the legal Emergency Board of railway experts arbitrarily set aside and their definite understandings with the President and other Administration officials repeatedly repudiated, the union officials felt they had exhausted every reasonable effort to secure the settlement necessary for the effective prosecution of the war. They, therefore, yielded to the increasing demands of their members and sent a complete report of the proceedings to their membership, together with a strike ballot on 25th October. The membership voted 98 per cent in favour of a strike.

Meanwhile the Special Emergency Board made its report to the President on 4th November, recommending amendment of the 7th August agreement to provide a sliding scale of 10 cents for the lowest to 4 cents for the highest paid employees. Mr. Vinson approved this on 8th November, to become effective 19th November. He informed the carriers (8th December), that notwithstanding opposition of the employees they were to put the scale into effect.

When the carriers notified the unions that they would not put the sliding scale into effect, the unions invoked the services of the Mediation Board because a new dispute had been created since no notice had been given and no new agreement reached. The Mediation Board called attention to the Railway Labor Act, providing that the *status quo* be maintained during mediation. This prevented arbitrary changing of existing contracts by Mr. Vinson's order.

Meanwhile the Senate had endorsed the Truman resolution, approving the 8 cent increase of the 7th August agreement, and the House Committee had acted to take railway wages out from the Stabilization Act and make them subject only to the Railway Labor Act. Mr. Vinson presented his views to both committees and was repudiated by both. When Congress adjourned from 21st December to 10th January, the employees demanded action. The non-operating union executives set 30th December, at 6 a.m., as the date for the strike and the operating unions fixed the same strike date. On 20th December the President took the dispute of the five operating organizations from the National Mediation Board and tried to settle it himself. After failing to reach a settlement with the operating organizations, he called the fifteen non-operating unions on 23rd December and asked them to accept him as arbitrator to decide what the wage increase should be. The President had already awarded 5 cents (in addition to the previous 4 cents) to two of the five operating organizations in lieu of overtime and expenses away from home; the problem to be decided for the fifteen non-operating organizations concerned the amount they should receive in lieu of overtime.

The fifteen non-operating unions agreed to accept the 10 to 4 cents sliding scale and requested the President to secure an agreement from the railroads, stating the amount of wage increase and the amount in lieu of overtime, or providing the literal forty-hour week.

The President suggested that his representatives spend the time between 23rd and 27th December working out

such an agreement; if they failed, on 27th December the unions would state whether they accepted the President as arbitrator. The President went to Hyde Park on the night of 23rd December, and between then and the 27th his representatives made no effort to settle the dispute on the forty-hour week. Instead, and in violation of the understanding with the President, they tried on 24th December to force the unions to accept the President as arbitrator.

The fifteen union executives met on 27th December according to their understanding with the President, but when seeking a conference with him, were told by Mr. Byrnes that they could not see him, but must answer within the hour (before 5 p.m.) as to his acting as arbitrator. Their answer was delivered at 4.35 p.m., accepting the 10 to 4 cents sliding scale and agreeing that he could arbitrate the overtime question (Three of the five operating unions had still not accepted him as arbitrator).

The President at 6 p.m. signed the Executive Order, taking over the railroads at 7 p.m. on 27th December. He had, however, no further contact with the fifteen unions; the press carried a statement that there had been a misunderstanding of the President's authority to arbitrate.

The point here is that so far as the fifteen non-operating unions were concerned there was no need to take over the railroads. Authority to strike had been withdrawn on 27th December.

On 5th January, the President established a new Special Emergency Board outside the Railway Labor Act to consider the wage claims of the non-operating employees through which the following agreement was made on 17th January, 1944:

The wage increases, as recommended by the Special Emergency Board in its Report dated 4th November, 1943, are ratified by both parties and apply from 1st February, 1943. All wages of less than 47 cents per hour to be increased 10 cents per hour; wages of 47 cents to 57 cents, 9 cents per hour; of 57 cents to 70 cents, 8 cents per hour; of 70 cents to 80 cents, 7 cents per hour; of 80 cents to 90 cents, 6 cents per hour; of 90 cents to 97 cents, 5 cents per hour; 97 cents and over, 4 cents per hour. From 27th December, 1943, supplementary increases are to be added so as to produce total increases of: (a) 11 cents per hour for those employees who, under the recommendations of said Board, received an increase of 10 cents per hour, (b) 10 cents per hour for those employees who, under the recommendations of said Board, received an increase of 9 cents per hour, and (c) 9 cents per hour for all other employees.

The supplementary increases shall be paid as the equivalent of or in lieu of claims for time and one-half pay for time worked over forty hours per week; and shall be paid until proclamation by the President of the United States or declaration by Congress of the cessation of hostilities and thereafter until changed in accordance with the Railway Labor Act. This settlement, agreed to in time of war, shall be without prejudice to the right of either party after the expiration of the above date to seek a change in the agreement which is now made with respect to such supplementary increases, in accordance

TRADE UNIONS NEGLECTING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

We are in the period of the war when the certainty of victory is no longer doubted, although the period of its achievement may not yet be estimated with accuracy. However, most authorities agree that the war in Europe will end this year.

National leaders are conferring with each other on, and discussing in their own Government, matters that will be of great political and economic significance, not only to the people of their own, but also to those of other nations. Business leaders in the respective nations are devoting more of their time and thought to questions of post-war trade so far as it is likely to affect their own particular commodities or forms of production. Departments of State are collaborating with business executives in plans for the advancement of their particular economic interests, and for the frustration of the counter plans of trade competitors of other nationalities, in the scramble for trade that will take place immediately the war ends.

But there have been no discussions nor any planning for post-war requirements on behalf of the common people of all nations; nor has anything been done to ensure that their interests will receive consideration in the planning of post-war affairs.

All the planning and scheming that is being engaged in, has to do with the post-war reservation or advancement of particular national, political, financial or trade interests. In none of these discussions is the interest of the common people of the respective nations, a topic of major concern. Such subjects as "The New Order," or "Economic Security for the People," or standards of living, or working hours, or wages rates are not on the agenda. The discussions are proceeding as if those matters had been already determined on the basis of pre-war standards.

That situation represents a grave danger to the interests of the international working class. They have been lulled into a false sense of security respecting their post-war interests, by promises that were made under the emotional stress and strain of possible defeat, and which promises are now being openly relegated to the background of post-war affairs. It is time, then, something was done to ensure that the interests and requirements of the workers are made the subject of planning, and to establish effective international machinery that will compel consideration being given to working class requirements in the post-war world.

The organizations that are most fitted to set about the drafting of the workers' post-war plans, and the establishment of the machinery required to implement them with action if necessary, is the trade union movement of the respective countries, acting internationally. They are representative of the majority of the people of those countries. They represent those on whom the burden and sacrifice of war have fallen most heavily. They are representative of the majority of those who will have made victory over Fascism possible. They are the only organizations that will be concerned with ensuring that

with the provisions of the Railway Labor Act. Overtime compensation shall continue to be computed and paid in accordance with the provisions of existing agreements and the rules now governing overtime payments shall remain in effect subject to the right of either party to seek any change in or supplement to such rules, provided that no request for overtime penalty pay shall be sought during such period for any hours worked solely because they are worked in excess of forty per week.

Condensed from The Master, Mate and Pilot,

February, 1944.

the promises made the people respecting their future rewards will be honoured.

It will be a tragedy if this war is concluded and peace conditions determined without a trade union charter of post-war requirements having been framed and made a matter for strong representation in the high councils in which post-war political, economic and social affairs are designed for the world at large.

Nor can we afford to be content with the same arrangement of peace-time affairs as followed the termination of the 1914-1918 war, when working class requirements in the post-war period were regarded as being fully protected by the futile gesture of setting up an International Labour Office, that accomplished nothing of economic value for the world's workers. On this occasion, Labour, through the Trade Union Movement, should demand recognition and representation in the councils where peace affairs are being determined.

The International Trade Union Movement has acquired the right to such recognition and representation in any gathering in which the future way of life of the people of the world is to be discussed or determined. It has acquired the right because of:

- (1) the major contribution being made by those whom it represents, in every country, to the defeat of Fascism;
- (2) it is the only organized movement whose objective is commonly acceptable to the workers of all nations, and is, therefore, the only movement capable of establishing real international unity in the post-war world;
- (3) it is the only avenue of expression through which the workers of all nations can give voice to their common post-war requirements;
- (4) it is the only movement that is without national or racial prejudices, aspirations or jealousies, and whose belief in a "New Order" cannot be influenced by sordid considerations of economic or financial supremacy in the post-war period.

No party to any previous conference can claim to have had those qualifications, nor is any other party to any future peace-arranging gathering likely to possess them. Therefore, none of them has been, or will be, in a position to approach the serious matters of post-war concern, with the same objectivity of outlook, and with the interests of the people at heart to the same extent as would representatives of the international trade unions.

Throughout this war the people have been led to believe that the defeat of the enemy would mean for them the establishment of an entirely different state of affairs than that which they lived under in the past. To most people to whom that inducement to fight was offered, it represented a promise that they would be freed from the economic uncertainty under which they had lived, and which had come to be regarded as the Divinely ordained condition of life for them, and that they would be given access to the economic, social and cultural opportunities that were enjoyed by the more fortunate sections of their communities.

The people are looking forward to the redemption of these promises, accepted by them in good faith from their leaders. If those promises are not redeemed, then the people of every country cannot look forward to the expectation of anything more than a repetition of the history of the period between 1918 and 1939—a short period of immediate post-war jubilation and work (the period of bread and circuses), and a long period of economic jolts and jars, in which they suffered untold misery and hardship, while their rulers struggled, manoeuvred, and intrigued trying to secure trade domination over each other, establishing political groupings of nations favourable to their own policies, which led eventually to the establishment of Fascist dictatorships in several countries, with the inevitable result—War.

It is all very well for some well-intentioned people to say, "That can't occur again." It can; and it will. Because up to the present we have not posed any alternative to it, excepting the futile one of planning to introduce dole schemes immediately the war ends, instead of delaying their introduction until the full blast of depression hits us as we did last time.

There is much talk about Post-War Reconstruction in government circles; and we have no doubt that most of those engaging in it are genuinely desirous of doing something that will avoid throwing the people back into the depths of economic depression immediately the war ends. But all schemes of Post-War Reconstruction that are discussed or planned by our political leaders are conditioned by the belief that they must be carried out within the framework of the existing economic system. We maintain, then, that they must necessarily be plans for "dole" work, such as our pre-war Unemployment Relief Schemes, and that, therefore, they cannot be a contribution to the establishment of the New Order which the people are expecting as a result of their sacrifices in this war, and upon the promises of which the war took on the form of an evangelistic campaign for the most of them.

If the promises given the people of a "New Order" are to be honoured, if "freedom from want" is to be assured the people of any—or all—nations, then something more than "cradle to grave" dole schemes is necessary. But the people will not get anything more unless their representative organizations press their claims and take action to see they are given the consideration they deserve by those who will have the planning of the world that is to come into being after this war.

That is why we think the Trade Union Movement

should be acting now to prepare the statement of claim on behalf of the working people.

In addition to undertaking that international responsibility, the trade unions should be giving consideration to post-war affairs as they are likely to affect conditions within their own nations. In Australia, for instance, there are likely to be many problems arising that will be new to this country, and on which the trade union movement here will need to have some prepared policy. For instance, what is likely to be the effect on Australian wage-rates and Australian standards of living, of the agreements made to "eliminate discriminatory treatment in international commerce, and the reduction of tariffs and other trade barriers?" Are we to abandon any, some, or all of our newly established industries and revert to the position of "swapping" foodstuffs for manufactures? To what extent, and in which direction, will it be necessary to maintain some of the war-time controls that have been imposed on us? To what extent should government enterprise replace private enterprise? How are the nearly one million persons now engaged in the Forces and war-time industries to be transferred to civil occupations, and what occupations are likely to be available for them?

These, and many more such problems, will affect the interests of the workers in this country immediately the war ceases. But, to date, no serious consideration has been given them by any representative trade union body in the direction of preparing a trade union policy in respect of them.

The trade union movement here is neglecting its responsibility in respect of both national and international affairs of importance to the future welfare of the people. It is leaving policy-planning in respect of these matters to Governments, State Departments, Chambers of Commerce, etc. That state of affairs must be changed. The trade union movement must not remain content with that manner of planning post-war affairs. It must take the initiative in respect of those which is its special responsibility—those that affect, or are likely to affect, the future welfare and standards of the working people. That class look to the union movement to protect its interest in respect of post-war affairs. The unions cannot afford to betray that trust.

The task will not be easy. Indeed, it will be a difficult one. And it cannot be superimposed on trade union officials that are already heavily burdened with work. It is a task that will involve heavy research and inquiry work, and possibly will require that the services of specialists not now engaged in trade union work be obtained to assist in it. That will require further financial calls on trade unions. But they will be a form of investment that will bring good return.

However, the primary task seems to be that of arousing the trade unions to a realization of their responsibilities in respect of preparation for post-war problems instead of leaving all the planning and preparation to others who have no special interest in workers' welfare. If the governing bodies of trade unionism come to such realization, the manner of approach and the machinery required will present no great difficulties.

There may not be much time left for us in which to undertake this work. Other interests are well ahead of us in respect. While trade unionists have been concentrating on winning the war, and to that end have temporarily abandoned many of the principles and rights, the establishment of which have involved great sacrifice in the past, other interests have been planning deeply in an endeavour to ensure that their rights and privileges will not only be restored, but increased, after the war.

We cannot afford to be passive in the face of the activity of those opposing interests.

From The Advocate, Journal of the Australian Railwaymen's Union.

Read, Reflect and Write to Us

The purpose of this column is to provoke thought on world problems and those of our own movement, and it will contain matter from all parts of the world. This matter will be presented as it was served up, whether you or we like it or not. We are not responsible for the views expressed and for the present pass no comment thereon. Matter will be selected because it shows evidence of perceiving a problem, because it is calculated to provoke thought, and because it may contribute towards a clarification of thought.

Our first quotation is from the British "Transport and General Workers' Record," in which it expresses its views on the position of the International Labour Office in connection with the Conference of this body to be held at the end of April in Philadelphia.

The I.L.O. is quite clear itself what it wants to do, as will be seen from its declaration on aims and purposes which the conference at Philadelphia will be asked to adopt.

This declaration, which adds up to a demand for a fair share of the fruits of progress to all, will be warmly welcomed by the workers everywhere. But to hail it as Labour's International Charter is not enough. It must be backed up by the vigorous demand of a well-informed body of opinion that the I.L.O. shall have more power than it had in the past, and shall have a voice in the shaping of policy of other international bodies, who are thinking out schemes for the solution of post-war problems, and whose decisions "affect so vitally the lives and well-being of ordinary folk."

What other international bodies is the I.L.O. interested in? All of them. Human labour is the most vital part of the process of wealth production and exchange, and the problems thrown up by that process and the solutions tried from time to time affect the workers everywhere, however remote they may believe themselves to be at the moment from the country where those problems are making themselves acutely felt. A policy aimed at easing an economic or financial problem in one part of the world may throw out of employment a large number of workers in another part and endanger the wage standards built up by organized effort.

Quite clearly, therefore, if the I.L.O. is to do its job efficiently, facilities for consultation with other international bodies concerned with post-war problems must be provided. It must not be kept in the dark. It must be kept informed of the lines on which others are thinking; what policies they have for the resettlement and employment of the people in the war-devastated countries, the rebuilding of industry, the reconstruction of world trade, the guaranteeing of fair prices for the producers of primary commodities, the stabilization of world prices and rates of exchange and many other vital problems.

Policy on any of these problems reached without consultation or any regard to the views of the I.L.O. may be of such a character as to make it impossible for member nations to implement decisions reached at I.L.O. conferences.

The I.L.O., with the knowledge and experience it has gained in the service of world labour during the past twenty-five years, and with its staff of experts drawn from many nations, has a valuable contribution to make to the cause of human progress, and the workers everywhere must see to it that it is given the facilities and the power and finance necessary for the full employment of that knowledge and experience in the struggle for a well-planned and peaceful world.

We take our next quotation from the 1943 Report of the International Union of Food and Drink Workers in Zurich that recently reached us.

Up to the end of the year covered by the Report the course

EDITOR'S NOTE.—*Since this article was written, the Emergency Council of the International Federation of Trade Unions has submitted to affiliated organizations a draft social and economic programme. The plans of the British Trades Union Congress for a world trade union conference have also taken shape, and if all goes according to plan it will be opened in London on 5th June this year. Both initiatives are steps in the direction proposed by "The Advocate". We reprint this article, however, because it expresses desires and views which we believe are held by trade-unionists throughout the world—for the simple reason that the problems raised are world-wide. It is further hoped that by giving an echo to this voice from Australia, the action of the I.F.T.U. and of the British T.U.C. will gain added impetus.*

of the war allowed of no conclusion as to when its end can be expected. The fall of Mussolini in July, 1943, and the capitulation of Italy on 9th September, 1943, did not bring our Italian friends the consequences for which they hoped. The population began really to feel the afflictions of war, and in Central and Northern Italy the concomitants of the upheaval. In Southern Italy, and in Sicily, which had earlier been occupied by the Allies, it became evident that the Allied occupying forces had no wish to see trade unions established, and they used the excuse of the war situation to hinder the attempt to call a labour movement into being. Even an intervention by Citrine, the President of the International Federation of Trade Unions, was of no avail. So the year under review has brought no favourable prospects for a freer development of working class organizations, with less hindrance from the holders of power in our present society.

The class-conscious working class of all countries cherishes great hopes of a change in the social and economic order. In the democratic countries there is, indeed, no lack of promises in this regard from influential circles. But one would do well not to have too much faith in any resounding words uttered or fine gestures made by rulers in the course of their war-time propaganda. We fancy that after this war, also, the working class will have precious little thrown into its lap without having to fight for it. After the end of the present slaughter of the peoples economic and political chaos, and indescribable misery, will reign in the countries that have been the theatre of war. If we do not succeed in good time in eliminating international hatred and enmity from among the working class, the workers will once more be cheated of their hopes. . . .

. . . How the unspeakable misery can be abolished and people once more be assured of a peaceful existence, and what forms the reconstruction of the world will take—these are questions which occupy the thoughts of all conscientious men.

While the leaders of the Axis powers endeavour, by promising a flourishing economic system within a fascist society, to induce the peoples to make ever more and ever greater sacrifices of blood and property, in the democracies people are assured that a return to the political and economic institutions of pre-war times is out of the question, and that there must be a fair distribution of the product of labour. But everywhere there are clear signs of endeavours to defend the capitalist economic order at all costs, and to keep it in being after the war, while putting off the wage-earning masses with a few carefully calculated social institutions that will make no inroads on the profits of the possessing classes. But it may very well be that the workers in all countries will duly present their bill after the war, and that if they remain united and resolute they will get substantially what they have earned. We hope so. In any case the trade unions, as representing the enlightened and class-conscious working class, will have an important task to fulfil in the building up of the post-war world.