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and other countries

Origin and Significance of the International Seafarers' Charter

By J. H. OLDENBROEK,

Acting General Secretary of the I.T.F. and Secretary of the Seamen's Section.

THROUGHOUT the period of the war the Seamen's Section of the I.T.F. has been able to carry on its work without interruption. It may, indeed, be said that both in extent and importance its activities have exceeded by far all earlier performances in the international field.

To a great extent these activities have been connected with the conduct of the war, in which the men of the merchant navy have played such a disproportionate and highly important part. In this connection it is relevant to recall that all the seamen's unions affiliated to the I.T.F. have from the outbreak of war, in September, 1939, ranged themselves beside the Allies—thus continuing a struggle waged incessantly and with the utmost vigour by the I.T.F. ever since the rise of Fascism and National Socialism.

The resistance met in the process, which was aimed, not only against the Allied war effort, but also against the existence of the seamen's unions themselves, was successfully overcome, thanks in great part to the fact that many of the European seamen's unions took the step of appointing representatives in ports outside Europe. Above all, however, it was due to the insight and devotion of the seamen that the efforts to undermine the Allied war effort and to destroy the seamen's trade unions finally came to nought—after in the summer of 1940 the outlook had seemed very black indeed.

Following the invasion of Norway, Denmark and the Low Countries, and the fall of France, the working conditions of seamen came to be more or less on loose foundations. The moment was seized by the seamen's unions affiliated to the I.T.F. to lay down the policy that the earnings of seamen serving outside their occupied home countries should in no case be lower than those of British seamen and that where pre-war wages were higher than those of British seamen at least the higher wages should operate. This policy of the I.T.F. was fully realized, with the result that the wages of Polish, Belgian and French seamen, among others, were substantially increased. The same happened with the wages of Greek and Yugoslav seamen. Subsequently a host of improvements have been secured all along the line in wages, war bonuses and working hours, while at the same time an attempt was made, with considerable success, to bring and keep the conditions of the several nationalities in line with one another.

A very important achievement was registered by the I.T.F.—co-operating for the purpose with the International Mercantile Marine Officers' Association (I.M.M.O.A.)—in the field of war-time safety provisions aboard merchant ships. This was at the meeting of the Joint Maritime Commission of the I.L.O.,

held in London in June, 1942, where safety at sea was the main subject of discussion. The Workers' Group on the J.M.C.—the composition of which was determined by the I.T.F.—seized the opportunity to put forward a proposal, which was unanimously adopted, requesting the I.L.O. "to study whether it was practicable to prepare an International Maritime Charter, setting out guiding principles for an international minimum standard applicable to seafarers of all nationalities and embodying the best practicable social legislation affecting seafarers."

The adoption of this proposal led the I.T.F. and the I.M.M.O.A. to set up a Joint Committee to prepare a draft of an International Seafarers' Charter. The results of this preparatory work have meanwhile been before two Joint International Seafarers' Conferences, and with the acceptance of the Joint Committee's recommendations at the latter of these conferences, held in London on July 28th and 29th, 1944, the scene has been set for a campaign to translate the Charter into reality.

The Charter on the one hand presents a reasoned case for improving the conditions of life and work of seafarers. It states that profound changes are needed in the conditions under which the officers and men of the merchant navy carry on their occupation; that the attempts made by the seafarers' trade unions to improve conditions, especially in the period following the last war, were foiled not only by the obdurate opposition of the internationally organized shipowners, but also by the reluctance and impotence of the governments to promote a general rise in seafarers' conditions by furthering international arrangements. In their attempts to break this opposition and overcome this reluctance and impotence, says the Charter further, the trade unions encountered considerable obstacles of various kinds: uncontrolled expansion of tonnage followed by laying up of ships; shrinking of world trade; lack of international co-operation with vicious competition as a result: violent fluctuations in monetary exchange rates, with the same result; practice of transferring ships to foreign flags—invariably the flags of countries backward in social provisions; engagement of coloured seamen at conditions far inferior to those of the crews displaced.

During the period between the two wars, it is further stated, it was clearly demonstrated that socially progressive countries, where disposed to raise the standards of the shipping industry, were seriously handicapped by the weakening it involved in the competitive power of their national merchant navies. From this it follows that the international character of the shipping industry makes it imperative to seek the widest possible uniformity in the working conditions of the seafarers, as otherwise the standards of the most advanced countries will always be endangered by those of the countries lagging behind. During the present war it has proved possible to bring about a greater measure of uniformity than ever before in both the basic wage rates and the other conditions of the seafarers of the United Nations. This creates an unprecedented opportunity for winning all the maritime nations for the acceptance of international minimum standards; it is reinforced by the fact that the seafarers

of countries whose conditions have been raised during the war will resist any attempt to whittle them down again and thus to put an obstacle in the path of a permanent improvement of the international living standards of the seafarers.

On the other hand the Charter contains a series of clauses designed to lay down international minimum standards for wages and working and living conditions. The wide scope of the Charter is illustrated by an enumeration of its chapter headings: Wages, Increments, Allowances and Bonuses; Continuous Employment; Entry, Training and Promotion; Hours and Manning; Accommodation, Hygiene and Medical Services; Safety; Social Insurance; Full Recognition of Seafarers' Organizations; Legal Rights and Obligations of Seafarers.

An International Charter cannot be a collection of all the best conditions prevailing in the various countries. There are countries where working and social conditions of seamen are, under one heading or another, superior to those proposed, but the purpose of the Charter is not to indicate a distant goal to be reached eventually by the most advanced countries; its object is to lay down an immediate programme to be realized by all countries now, including those whose poor conditions have always hampered the raising of conditions elsewhere. The aim of the Charter, that is to say, is to bring low-standard countries up to an international minimum, thus laying a solid foundation on which further progress can be realized by the more advanced countries.

It may be said, nevertheless, that this Charter is the most comprehensive international programme of trade union demands that has ever been presented. It is realistic in the sense that it does not start from an assumed necessary change in property relationships or from a hypothetical system of operation. At the same time the Charter frankly declares that in the opinion of the seafarers' organizations "the system of free enterprise is not conducive to a successful operation of an international industry like shipping," and that they "consider it to be in the best interests of world co-operation and of the national communities, as well as of the seafaring community itself, that merchant shipping should be an object of constant public attention and of international consultation and agreement between governments and that there should be established for that purpose an international agency on which managements and seafarers should be represented through their international organizations."

Due attention is also given to the question of coloured seamen, as they are called, concerning whom the Charter says: "The principles outlined in this Charter are also to apply to Asiatic, African and West Indian seamen, who continue to be employed under conditions less favourable than those obtained by white seamen. The seafarers' trade union organizations are resolved to end this state of affairs, which is detrimental to the best interests of all seafaring people, and to take all necessary action to regulate wages and working conditions of those seamen by collective agreement."

From the above brief description of the Charter, which is shortly to receive world-wide publicity in seventeen or so different languages, it appears that the officers' and seamen's unions propose to embark on a concerted campaign to secure the adoption of international standards such that the seafarers of all nations will be assured the beginnings of an existence worthy of human beings. That such a campaign should be initiated in the shipping industry needs no explanation. For this is the industry where, more than in any other, conditions in one country have always been played off against those of others. Seafarers do not wish to be forced into that position again, and they have pointed the way towards a better future. If that path is not followed by shipowners and governments, the seafarers' organizations will have no alternative but to resort to direct action in order to realize their aims.

The International Seafarers' Charter is to be discussed at a meeting of the Joint Maritime Commission to be held

at an early date. This is the decision of a sub-committee of the Commission, which has agreed that the next meeting shall be primarily devoted to such a discussion and that the draft Charter prepared by the seafarers' organizations shall be taken as a basis. The development marks, incidentally, an innovation in I.L.O. procedure.

Without doubt many of the proposals contained in the Charter far exceed what is provided by existing International Conventions and Recommendations, but it is also true that in many respects the improvements in seafarers' conditions which have been secured during the war by the process of negotiation also go beyond the provisions of those Conventions and Recommendations.

The Maritime Session of the International Labour Conference, which has been announced for 1945 will, if it is found possible to realize the Charter through the I.L.O., have to devise the means of making up the arrears.

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE IN PHILADELPHIA

By **J. H. OLDENBROEK**

Deputy Member of the Governing Body of the I.L.O.

Although a review of the Philadelphia Conference from the pen of Mr. John Price appeared in the previous number of this Journal, I have no hesitation in contributing an article on the same subject. There is, indeed, much to be said about the significance of this Conference and the general remarks to which I propose to confine myself are still far from exhausted. (The decisions of the Conference have meanwhile been published in the official Bulletin of the International Labour Office and cover a volume of no less than 118 pages).

Among insiders it was no secret that the date of 20th April was chosen so that the International Labour Conference might complete its work before the invasion of the West European Continent was undertaken. Suggestions that the Office and the delegates should be allowed more time for the preparatory work by postponing the Conference for a few weeks could consequently not be met.

For quite a number of the decisions which were taken the Conference had to suspend its Standing Orders. The purpose behind this was to make it possible for the International Labour Organization to undertake the task of framing the social provisions of the peace settlement. In this connection it is certainly unfortunate that Soviet Russia came to the decision not to accept the urgent invitations to take part in the Conference. The reasons for this abstention have never been given officially, but there are strong grounds to believe that they lie in the fact that the International Labour Office has not severed all its connections with the League of Nations. This conclusion may be drawn from articles which have appeared in the Soviet press and which suggest that

Soviet Russia did not participate because the International Labour Conference was not held under the auspices of the United Nations, as was the case, for example, with the Food and Agriculture and the U.N.R.R.A. Conferences, in which Soviet Russia did participate. To this argument the following answer may be made: In contradistinction to the League of Nations, the International Labour Organization was able to carry on during the war and after the Conference held in New York in 1941 even to extend its work again considerably, so that there could be no question of ignoring it when convening an International Labour Conference. Even though one or two of the major countries were not associated with the work of the I.L.O., it still was the biggest official international organization and included neutral states among its members, as well as several belligerent countries not belonging to the League. It may be added that the international trade union movement had pressed strongly for the holding of an International Labour Conference, anxious as it was to speed up work on this plane. The workers' delegates could therefore only regret the absence of Soviet representatives. It is to be hoped that before long a modus will be found which will permit of Soviet participation in the work of the International Labour Organization.

* * *

The International Labour Organization took a resolute decision when it claimed for itself the right, on the one hand, "to examine and consider all international, economic and financial policies and measures in the light of this fundamental objective" and on the other hand, "having considered all relevant economic and financial

factors (to) include in its decisions and recommendations any provisions which it considers appropriate."*

Thus a fundamental principle has been settled about which there was so much controversy throughout the inter-war period, when the I.L.O.'s right to handle economic and financial affairs was challenged at every step. Whenever it tried, it brought a hornets' nest about its ears and its competence, responsibility and meddlesomeness were loudly deprecated.

By this declaration of principle the I.L.O. went forward on the path which had been traced at the New York Conference of 1941. *The I.L.O. has come of age. The deeper meaning of this must be that Ministries of Social Affairs or Labour may no longer be second or third rank departments, but should in all countries, where this is not already the case, be attributed first rank status.* The solution of social questions must, nationally and internationally, be the primary concern, to which economic and financial policy and action shall be directed.

Whether the I.L.O. and the Ministries of Social Affairs will attain this stature and succeed altogether in ridding themselves at the international level of other influences, including "Foreign Affairs," will depend above all on the real influence exerted by the labour movement on the governments in the respective countries. In my view the prospects in this respect can be faced with a fair amount of confidence.

Needless to say, neither the I.L.O. nor the national Ministries of Social Affairs may bite off more than they can chew. The need for a distribution of functions remains, but the focal point has to be shifted. Other international agencies, *ad hoc*, or more permanent in character, will have to be created as and when needed, but wherever they concern themselves with questions affecting the powers and functions of the I.L.O. this body must be consulted on contemplated policies and measures. The Philadelphia Conference has pledged the full co-operation of the International Labour Organization with such international bodies.

Reverting to my earlier observations, it seems to me that when these other agencies are created and co-ordinated, the League of Nations in its present form will disappear, after which Russian participation in the I.L.O. can be promoted, although I shall go on hoping that an earlier opportunity may present itself for such a development.

* * *

If the International Labour Organization is properly to fulfil its considerably wider task, its machinery will have to be moulded on a new pattern. I had advocated this at the New York Conference in 1941 already, and this time I secured the adoption of a motion saying that "the International Labour Office should proceed forthwith with the setting up of industrial sections" and inviting the Governing Body "to elaborate regulations governing the activities of industrial committees."

* The fundamental objective was "that all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity."

This may be termed the vertical structure of the I.L.O. It offers a tremendous opportunity to the International Trade Secretariats, for a wide field of international activity is being opened up, *in which the individual trade unions in the different countries will be directly involved.* As regards the horizontal or geographical structure of the I.L.O., there is also a need for overhauling, by devoting far more attention to regional problems than has been the case in the past and holding regional conferences. Conferences of this kind for Asia and the Near and Middle East are already under consideration, and a European Conference in the near future is no improbability.

In Philadelphia many points were made about constitutional questions. There is the question whether all countries are eligible for membership of the I.L.O. regardless of their political structure. My belief is that the tendency is towards the exclusion from the I.L.O. of countries which unmistakably deny its first principles. The sharp protest of the Workers' Group in the case of Argentina was a clear indication of this. But there are other points—such as the sovereign right of member countries simply to refuse to ratify conventions or to postpone ratification indefinitely. Some solution of these questions will have to be found if the work of the I.L.O. is not to be in vain.

It is now almost a platitude to say that without the support of a vigorous trade union movement the I.L.O. would lose its significance. On the other hand grave warnings have been uttered against the trade unions pinning all their faith to the I.L.O. and neglecting the opportunities of independent action. In my opinion these warnings have only an academic value. In practice it is only countries with a weak trade union movement which rely completely on the I.L.O.—countries, that is, which are not strong enough to effect major reforms by their own efforts.

At the same time there is a need, not for a revision, but for a preciser formulation of the relations of the trade unions with the I.L.O. That formulation must state, in my opinion, that the trade unions retain their complete independence of the I.L.O., and that the I.L.O. will never be able to assume the function of the trade unions. It can facilitate that function, on the one hand by the possession of an apparatus capable of carrying out valuable investigations and collecting and publishing useful information, in which respect it will for the time being be far ahead of the international trade union movement, and on the other hand *by the fact that it can support the efforts of the trade unions by promoting international agreements establishing minimum standards.*

It is possible, and even probable, that in the coming period the I.L.O. will again give rise to disappointment. But would that not be partly because expectations are pitched too high? *The trade unions should not expect of the I.L.O. things which are beyond their own powers of achievement.* Nor, on the other hand, should the International Labour Office and the International Labour Organization be looked upon as tribunes where people can proclaim high ideals and then leave it at that. The

I.L.O. is above all in the nature of a negotiating body, where the atmosphere is for the most part businesslike, at least as long as issues of practical politics are under discussion, and where professions of faith cause little excitement. Just as the trade unions are to play their part in the solution of social and economic problems through practical participation in the agencies to be created for the purpose on the national plane, so the trade union movement also has a role to fulfil in the I.L.O. on the international plane. Practical and sound knowledge of the trade concerned is here one of the prerequisites.

It may be assumed that in many fields there will be a growing measure of international consultation through the I.L.O. The role of the trade unions therein will become ever greater: first, the influence of labour as an independent force is destined to increase throughout the world; second, with the growth of public control over the means of production the trade unions will be called on more and more to share in the shaping of policy; third, in a number of countries important sectors of industry will pass into public ownership. With these

developments social and economic issues will come to be discussed in an atmosphere altogether different from that of pre-war days. As I have said already, *the trade unions must retain their independence and rely primarily on their own activities, general and industrial, but at the same time those independent activities should be co-ordinated with those conducted within the framework of the I.L.O.*

To the above general remarks I confine myself in the present article, but before concluding I wish to pay a tribute to the International Labour Office for the splendid work done in preparing for the Philadelphia Conference. And last, but not least, I express my admiration and appreciation of the excellent work of the President of the Conference, Mr. Walter Nash, Minister of Finance in the New Zealand Labour Cabinet. I do not think that a better man could have been found for the task. There was many an occasion when he did not disguise his own opinion, and it was always an opinion marked by sincere idealism and practical realism, coupled with wide experience and deep knowledge. Progressive little New Zealand may well be proud of him.

INDIAN SEAMEN AND THE INTERNATIONAL SEAFARERS' CHARTER

By SURAT ALLEY

Representative in Great Britain of the Indian Seamen's Union

"Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere." These words are taken from the now famous Philadelphia Declaration. The International Labour Conference which adopted this Declaration was attended by representatives of Governments, Employers and Workers, and it would be interesting to know the reactions to it of the representatives of the Indian Government and the Indian employers. As far as the Indian workers are concerned, it must seem but another pious declaration which will not be followed by deeds. Indian seamen in particular know that the Government of India, on the flimsiest pretexts or on no pretext at all, has refrained from ratifying most of the Conventions and Recommendations of the International Labour Conferences. They are wondering what the Philadelphia Declaration will mean for them, and what will be done to end their poverty and the danger it constitutes to others.

Indian seamen have been watching with close interest another development in the field of international discussions—the three International Seafarers' Conferences which have been held, during the past nine months, under the joint auspices of the International Transport Workers' Federation and the International Mercantile Marine Officers' Association, to consider and formulate a post-war programme of minimum demands for the seamen of all nations. The document emerging from these discussions, entitled the International Seafarers' Charter, clearly recognizes, in Article 11, the Indian seamen's right to equality of treatment. It says: "The principles outlined in this Charter are to apply also to Asiatic, African, East and West Indian seamen, who continue to be employed under conditions less favourable than those obtained by white seamen. The seafarers' trade union organizations are resolved to end this state of affairs,

which is detrimental to the best interests of all seafaring people and to take all necessary action to regulate wages and working conditions of these seamen by collective agreement."

* * *

The gap between the conditions demanded in the Charter and those secured so far by European seamen—British, Norwegian, Greek, Belgian, Dutch, and others—is not very wide. But in the case of Indian seamen it is so enormous that the Charter must seem to them an all but unattainable ideal.

Thus the Charter proposes a basic wage of £18 a month for an able seaman, which is not very much more than European seamen are receiving at present. The basic wage of an Indian deckhand, however, stands to-day at £3 15s. 0d. to £4 10s. 0d., and an Indian fireman's at £3 9s. 0d. to £4 1s. 0d. The corresponding figures for British deckhand and fireman are £14 and £14 10s. 0d.

As regards war bonus Indian seamen have also not had the same treatment as their white colleagues. British seamen were first accorded a war bonus at the uniform rate of £5 a month, later raised to £10, for all ranks and ratings. This uniform bonus of £10 was also granted to Chinese and Indonesian seamen. In the case of Indian seamen, however, the war bonus has from the beginning of the war been calculated on a percentage basis. Thus an Indian fireman got a war risk bonus of 8s. 7d. to 10s. 1d.—25 per cent of the pre-war wage—at the beginning of the war. It has subsequently been raised to £1 14s. 6d. to £2 0s. 6d.

During the war period a British fireman has had an increase of £4 7s. 6d. in basic wages, plus £10 war bonus, altogether an advance of £14 7s. 6d. The Chinese fireman similarly has benefited to the extent of £14 to £16 (Singapore and Hongkong respectively). But for the

Indian fireman the total advance is only £3 9s. 0d. to £4 1s. 0d.

These figures show how Indian seamen—already underpaid—have lagged still further behind. In spite of the important contribution they are making in the present struggle—1,500 of them served in the landing operations in Normandy—shipowners and authorities have not been willing to give them a fair deal.

When the question of wages and war risk bonus was raised in a Memorandum by the All India Seamen's Centre in Great Britain, which is a part of the Indian Seamen's Union (Bombay and Calcutta), the *Shipping World* remarked, in its issue of 23rd November, 1943: "These men have not fared badly in this respect since the war began." Later in the same paragraph it said: "What seems apparent is that Indian seamen have gained a greater advance in pay since the war than the seamen of any other countries." The facts cited above belie the statement of the *Shipping World*. The percentage increase in Indian seamen's wages no doubt looks impressive, but this only emphasizes how miserable is their pay. Mathematical conjuring will not hide the reality.

Shipping World also says: "A fact which is ignored" (by our Memorandum) "is that one Indian is not able to do the work of a white seaman—far from it, as experience has proved." And it goes on to argue about the "great difference in standard of living to which they are accustomed."

Asked about Indian seamen's conditions in the House of Commons on 16th February, 1943, the Secretary of State for India, Mr. L. S. Amery, replied: "But the Indian does not do the same amount of work and there is accordingly a great disparity in the numbers that have to be employed." To the further question, "Does the Right Honourable Gentleman suggest in his answer that one European can do the work of four Indians and really cannot he take some action to bring these disgraceful conditions to an end?" Mr. Amery replied: "No Sir, I certainly would not go so far as that. As I say, the problem of improving these conditions is at the moment being actively considered by the Government of India." It will be noted the Minister said "actively considered."

What are the facts? Accepted statistics show that the complement of a crew of a ship varies, according as it is white or Indian, as 20 to 29. In other words, a ship calling for a white crew of 20 men would require 29 Indian seamen to do the same work. Even allowing for this difference in present working capacity, therefore, it will be seen that Indian seamen are grossly underpaid compared with white seamen. Two remarks may be made. Firstly, that the present difference exists, not because the Indian is inherently less capable of work, but because he is not given the necessary training for the job. Secondly, that even where Indian seamen have the same experience as others they get no better treatment than otherwise. As a matter of fact there seems to be a tacit agreement between the shipping employers in Bombay and Calcutta to bar Indians who might prove to be as efficient as a European.

The argument about the cost of living likewise does not stand examination. Statistics prove conclusively that the cost of living in India is to-day not far below that in Glasgow or Liverpool, or even London. Besides, what about the Indian seamen who perform most of their service outside India?

Also in respect of other questions covered by the Charter—working hours and overtime pay, continuous employment, entry, training, promotion, accommodation, hygiene and medical services, safety and social insurances—Indian seamen enjoy nothing resembling the standards proposed. Indian seamen will be well content if it is recognized that the principles implicit in these standards are applicable to them, and that a start must be made without delay with bringing their conditions up to the level of other seamen in these respects.

This is only possible if the trade union organizations of the Indian seamen are recognized as bodies entitled to negotiate collectively on behalf of their members. Indian seamen, therefore, attach particular importance to Article 174 of the Charter, which states: "The trade unions of seafarers should be recognized by the Governments and given representation on all organs and bodies set up by Governments and Government Agencies to concern themselves with the economic, social and technical interests of the shipping industry and the persons employed therein."

As far as the shipowners are concerned, they show very little inclination to deal with the Indian Seamen's Union. Whenever representations have been made to their agents in Calcutta, through the Liners' Conference, they have studiously ignored the Union. When they are approached in Britain the answer given is that negotiations must take place in India.

As far as the Government is concerned, Indian seamen have been told that their problems are being "actively considered." Lord Wavell, before leaving for India, promised that he would take immediate steps in connection with these matters. Meanwhile a deputation appointed by the International Seafarers' Conference in London has met the High Commissioner for India and the Earl of Munster at the India Office, and was once more given the assurance that the matter is under the "active consideration" of the Government of India.

Indian seamen are wondering how long the period of "active consideration" is going to last?

If during this war there is any trouble and unrest among Indian seamen, the blame cannot be laid on the men themselves or on their organizations, nor on the excessive nature of their demands.

The Joint Maritime Commission of the I.L.O., at its meeting held in London in June, 1942, adopted an important resolution with regard to Indian seamen, which concludes that "all practicable steps should be taken to ensure that in the conditions of employment and general treatment of these seamen there shall be no unfavourable comparison with crews of vessels in similar trades and under the same registry." The hopes of Indian seamen have been raised high. They must not be disappointed.

TWO RAILWAYMEN'S UNIONS AT WORK

It has been the writer's privilege to attend this year's annual meeting of two British railwaymen's unions, the Railway Clerks' Association and the National Union of Railwaymen.

The R.C.A. delegates assembled in May in Blackpool. Conferences of the R.C.A. are impressive gatherings. This year the delegates, representing 333 branches out of a total of 439, numbered 485. War circumstances had prevented many branches from sending delegates, in particular the twenty-four branches in Ireland. At every R.C.A. conference there are necessarily a number of delegates attending for the first time, but the great majority have been before, while some veterans can boast of their participation in twenty to thirty consecutive conferences. This stability in the composition of the Conference is, probably, one of the factors that promote the intense feeling of community and comradeship that permeates the atmosphere of the conference hall. It probably accounts, also, for the fact that many figures on the "floor," as well as on the "platform," are so visibly held in high esteem by all delegates, an esteem that amounts to affection in certain cases, like that of President Percy Morris, General Secretary C. N. Gallie, and Treasurer J. Haworth.

The procedure makes for democracy and efficiency. The conduct of business is in the hands of a committee elected at the previous conference. This committee called the Standing Orders Committee, is wholly distinct and independent from the Executive Committee and the Officers of the Association. Subject to approval by the Conference, it determines what is to be discussed, and fixes the number of speakers and the time to be devoted to the deliberations on each subject. So much for democracy; as for efficiency, the fact that a four-day conference can dispose of an agenda of up to 200 items speaks for itself.

The report for 1943 records a membership of 87,645, an increase of 2,505. Of these, however, 21,102 are in the forces. Only 1,479 members were in arrears with their contributions. Women form a substantial proportion of the membership in peace-time and their number has increased considerably during the war. They play their part in the administration and activities of the organisation at all levels and particular care is taken to ensure their representation in the Executive Committee.

Relations with the two other railway trade unions, the National Union of Railwaymen and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, are excellent. In 1943, the three unions formed a Joint Committee for action in pursuance of common interests. This led to the invitation being extended, for the first time, to fraternal delegates from the other two unions. The Locomotivemen's Union, whose annual meeting was held at the same time as that of the R.C.A., could not send a representative, but in a fraternal message, expressed its satisfaction that co-operation between the railway trade unions had become closer. The National Union of Railwaymen sent its President, Fred Burrows, who

received a warm welcome before his address and an ovation after.

The conference discussed rates of pay and superannuation, office accommodation and road transport, degrading of positions and night duty, promotion and stagnation, negotiating machinery and social services, trade union unity and compulsory trade union membership, trade union legislation and political activities, post-war transport organization and post-war conditions of work, social services and many other questions. The views and policy of the Association on some of these matters are of wider interest. They were very well expressed in Percy Morris' presidential address, from which a few quotations follow:

"Politics is only a dirty business to those who stoop to soil their hands. . . . The Labour Party and the Trade Unions are not independent of each other—they are the political and industrial wings of the same Movement. Our interests are closely knit together, and we should engage in the maximum of mutual aid. . . .

"It is still true that those things which are socially necessary must be socially owned and controlled. . . . Land, Transport, Coal, Power and Finance are amongst the essentials requiring national ownership and control. . . . One of the first duties of the Government in the post-war period should be to reorganize the transport system; take away the private profit motive and co-ordinate the services by air, land and sea in the public interest. Moreover, transport is not only a national, but an international problem, and agreement should be sought on these lines. The Railway Trade Unions are prepared to assist and, in conjunction with the International Transport Workers' Federation, place their knowledge and experience at the disposal of the Government. . . .

"What are the essential conditions of peace? Germany must be disarmed and prevented from manufacturing armaments of any description—the poisonous fangs of war must be cut out—but the people will have to be fed, clothed, and allowed opportunities to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. . . . We must seek the remnants of the Democratic Parties, encourage them and aid them to show their people that the only way to rehabilitate themselves in the eyes of the world is by the gradual building up of sound democratic government in industry and politics. . . . The International Working Class Movement is the one body competent to attempt this grave task and I hope the wisest and best of our leaders will collaborate with those of the other Free Nations in an effort to lead our enemies step by step back to the comity of nations. Germany cannot escape the penalties of the war and her people will have to atone for their grievous folly, but there can be no permanent Hell even for the German Nation."

* * *

Attending a meeting of the supreme governing body of the N.U.R. is a quite different experience. Eighty delegates sit for a solid fortnight for seven hours a day. The agenda runs into several hundred items. Only speaking time is limited, not the number of speakers. The texts of resolutions and alternative resolutions (called amendments) are not modifiable, they must be adopted or rejected as they stand. The agenda and the discussion are thoroughly administrative in character. In the delegates' minds, terms like "trivial" or "unimportant" are not applicable to any item on the agenda. Only the few items of public interest offer an opportunity to "orators" to stir the emotions. All others require from the speaker administrative and technical knowledge. Whether the subject of a debate affects the interests of tens of thousands of members or only a few hundred, or even one single member, the tone of the discussions is the same, and so is the procedure, only the number of speakers varies.

The report for 1943 shows a membership of 405,758. 36,105 members are in the forces and 16,129 are retired. Compared with the previous year the total membership has increased by 11,614. The figure is 56,000 higher than at the end of 1939.

This year the N.U.R. conference was honoured by the presence of the General Secretary of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, Mr. W. P. Allen, and the President of the Railway Clerks' Association, Mr. Percy Morris. The innovation was visibly appreciated as a positive contribution to trade union unity in action. This visit of fraternal delegates of the two "craft unions" to the conference of the industrial union confirmed the identity of goal and purpose. Both fraternal delegates had a most sympathetic welcome.

The Conference dealt at length with the problem of post-war organization of transport, calling for the nationalization and co-ordination of the means of transport. A special committee is investigating the whole problem of wages and service conditions and is preparing a post-war programme. Meanwhile, the Union's negotiators have to seek adjustments for many larger or smaller groups whose conditions call for speedy improvement. The Conference devoted also a good deal of attention to the war and to politics in general. That British railwaymen are determined to see the war through, goes without saying. But they made it plain that they mean the "utter and complete defeat of Fascism and Nazism throughout the world." They called also for rates of pay or pension "consistent with present-day requirements" for the men and women in the armed forces, and for war widows and orphans. They voiced dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the political conduct of the war and referred particularly to British policy with regard to Spain. "We send greetings to our Comrades in Spain," says one resolution adopted, "believing that the united efforts of the Allied Nations will bring

to the Spanish Republicans complete Freedom and Liberty." One resolution calls for "a bold housing policy to meet the permanent needs of a growing community. . . . Housing development should be linked with general planning . . . and not be prejudiced by the private ownership of building sites or by any other form of vested interest." And the General Secretary's report to the Conference recalls that on the agenda of the British Labour Party a resolution stands in the name of the N.U.R., advocating the granting of "freedom to the Indian people to establish an independent National Government."

The President of the N.U.R. is jocularly referred to as the "watchdog" of the membership, supervising the Union's affairs. No president may be elected for more than three annual terms of office. Therefore, Mr. F. J. Burrows, who received the warmest thanks and unanimous praise for his services during his three terms of office, will not preside over the next conference.

And what of the future? John Benstead, the General Secretary, has put it concisely:

" . . . When the life of the nation was in jeopardy, the railwaymen did not let the nation down. It did not need the incentive of private enterprise to bring out the best in railwaymen who had risen to their height when the welfare of the community was at stake. If the membership could make their great sacrifices during the war, what could they not do if their industry was run for the public good? . . .

" . . . As they were fighting for the decent things of life on the fields of battle, they asked in return a decent standard of life, coupled with an adequate wage for every worker in the industry, a twelve-days' period of leave, and a sufficiency on which to exist after having given half-a-century to the industry and the country: a happy retirement free from care and want for the rest of their days on earth."

How to achieve it? Mr. Benstead recalls that one of the declared objects of the Union, as stated in its Rules, is "to work for the supersession of the capitalist system by a socialistic order of society."

PAUL TOFAHRN.*

THE WORK AND PROGRESS OF THE CANADIAN BROTHERHOOD OF RAILWAY EMPLOYEES AND OTHER TRANSPORT WORKERS

By J. E. McGUIRE

National Secretary-Treasurer

With the increased employment which has stemmed from the war has come a stimulation of trade union membership and activity. The Brotherhood has taken full advantage of the situation, using it to increase the number of its members, strengthen its bargaining position and gain improvements in the wages and working conditions for the many classes of transport workers it represents. Between the time that war broke out and the present, the Brotherhood has made many notable gains.

Starting out originally as a union for railway workers, the Brotherhood had to take cognizance of the growing importance of other types of transport, and in 1939 extended its jurisdiction to take in all classes of transport workers. Although the majority of Brotherhood members continue to be railway workers, considerable gains have been made in other fields despite war-time restrictions on motor transport. Since 1939 about thirty

divisions have been chartered which take in employees of such varied types of transportation as highway and urban cartage, inter-urban bus service, urban tramway and autobus service, taxicabs and ferries, inclusive of maintenance departments, and allied groups such as warehouse and storage employees and grain elevator employees. This section of the Brotherhood now comprises about a fourth of the total membership. Simultaneously there has been a healthy growth of membership among railway workers. The Brotherhood has not only added to the existing Divisions on the Canadian National Railways, where its main strength lies, but has chartered new Divisions on the C.N.R. and has branched out into smaller railways in various parts of Canada.

With respect to its railway membership on the Canadian National Railways, the Brotherhood was instrumental in obtaining for them a cost of living bonus

to compensate for increases in the cost of living after a year-long struggle. On December 16th, 1940, the Canadian government issued an order-in-council by which it in effect "froze" wages at their 1926-29 levels, with certain exceptions, but permitted the payment of a cost of living bonus, based on changes in the cost of living index, where it could be shown that the purchasing value of basic wage rates had been impaired. Three weeks later the Brotherhood made application for a cost of living bonus for all employees represented by it on the C.N.R. It is noteworthy that the Brotherhood was the first railway union to initiate this demand, the others following suit some two weeks later. Since the payment of the bonus was not mandatory, it was strongly resisted by the railway and the Brotherhood was forced to embark on a long and costly struggle to obtain its demand. The situation was aggravated by the dilatory attitude of the government and it was not until the Brotherhood applied for a strike vote that negotiations were speeded up. It is impossible in this short article to describe this dispute in detail. Suffice it to state that the members solidly supported their leaders and in the end achieved success, with the bonus payment being made retroactive. The fact that the Brotherhood was able to obtain the bonus and that its act in initiating a demand for the bonus resulted in all railway workers obtaining it, may account for the fact that the bonus was subsequently made mandatory for all workers.

Despite the seriousness of the struggle for the cost of living bonus, it did not distract the Brotherhood from carrying on the important function of organization. During 1940 the Brotherhood began to organize the tramways workers in Montreal, Canada's largest city. These workers had formerly belonged to two other unions, but at the time the Brotherhood stepped in, these unions had lost the allegiance of all but a handful of the employees. The company had never recognized either union as such, dealing instead with a Negotiating Committee of three, elected by the employees. The contract in effect at the time was obsolete and highly unsatisfactory, and there is reason to believe that collusion existed between the company and the old Negotiating Committee to prevent any important changes in wages and working conditions from being effected.

The first employees to be organized were the bus drivers and the Brotherhood faced many obstacles in obtaining recognition for this group, although a clear majority had indicated their desire to be represented by the Brotherhood. The company and the Negotiating Committee were united in opposition to the Brotherhood and for some time progress was slow; although not without results, divisions being also chartered among motormen, conductors and maintenance staffs. During 1942 the old Negotiating Committee perpetrated an act which proved beyond a doubt the bankruptcy of its leadership and effectively alienated any support that it had. Without consulting the members, the Negotiating Committee released the company from payment of a profit-sharing bonus which in that year amounted to several million dollars. The results may well be imagined. In a very short time the Brotherhood had enrolled a large

majority of all eligible employees and immediately sought to open negotiations with the company.

The company proved to be exceedingly recalcitrant in its attitude to the Brotherhood. Discontent and restlessness among the men mounted until, on March 28th, 1943, the men ceased work. For sixty hours not a street car or bus stirred in Montreal and the city was at a complete standstill. The members of the Brotherhood exercised complete discipline and no untoward incidents occurred. Public sympathy was on the side of the strikers, and, after government intervention, the company capitulated. The Brotherhood was recognized as the sole bargaining agency for the employees and a Negotiating Committee composed exclusively of Brotherhood members was elected. A few months later, thanks to the Brotherhood, the company distributed profit-sharing bonus cheques to more than 3,000 employees.

The situation might then have been converted into one of mutual harmony and understanding, but the company had yet to be convinced that the Brotherhood had the confidence of the employees. Obstacles were put in the way of the Negotiating Committee and negotiations dragged, with the result that another strike occurred about eleven months after the first one. Again the walk-out was complete, with not a vehicle in service. The men returned only after being assured that their demands would be met. Shortly after, negotiations were reopened and are still continuing. The company's attitude has undergone considerable change and fruitful results are expected. The Brotherhood has asked for upward adjustment in wages rates, improved working conditions, including such matters as hours of work, work clothes, overtime pay, longer vacation periods, etc., as well as the check-off of union dues and the union shop.

Returning to the work of the Brotherhood on the Canadian National Railways, it has recently concluded a series of protracted and difficult negotiations involving numerous occupational reclassifications. These reclassifications affect some thousands of clerical workers from coast to coast and have resulted in almost every case in an increase in basic rates of pay. Inasmuch as the increases have been made retroactive to February 1st, 1943, substantial sums have been received by these employees in back pay. At present the Brotherhood is negotiating on behalf of sleeping and dining car employees on the C.N.R. The principal issues are rates of pay and overtime.

Brotherhood officers are not only engaged in the day-to-day business of their own union, but play an active part as well in the Canadian Congress of Labour, of which the Brotherhood is an affiliate. The national officers of the Brotherhood, as well as its local organizers and other representatives, are constantly being pressed into service as negotiators on behalf of this or that union, and their assistance is frequently sought in drawing up briefs and legislative proposals. It is no mere coincidence that the President of the Brotherhood is at the same time President of the Canadian Congress of Labour and has been such since the inception of the latter. The Secretary-Treasurer of the Brotherhood is also a member of the

Continued on page 47

RAILWAYMEN'S AIMS IN CHILE

The Railwaymen's Industrial Federation of Chile, which held its third Congress in January of this year, in Santiago, was born of the persecutions the Chilean labour movement suffered in 1935 under President Alessandri, a former political left-winger and champion of the people who went wrong and developed dictatorial tendencies when he got into power. A National Unity Congress of the trade union movement, held in that year, decided on the constitution of relations committees, by industry, for the purpose of maintaining contacts and furthering unity. The first of these committees was set up by the railwaymen. It had an unhappy beginning: its members were imprisoned by the Government, and dismissed from the railway service; but the railwaymen's trade union movement survived, in spite of the dismissal of 560 railwaymen who took part in a strike in 1936. A temporary National Committee of United Organizations took up the work, and organized the First National Railwaymen's Congress, on 28th April, 1938, which led to the formation of the Railwaymen's Industrial Federation. A preliminary move, in November of the same year, was the amalgamation of a number of smaller unions to constitute the Union of Railway Workers of Chile, which joined with the James Watt Federation (a locomotivemen's union of long standing—the oldest trade union in Chile), and the Association of Railway Employees to form the Railwaymen's Industrial Federation, an organization that has in its ranks 14,411 of the 20,000 men or so in the Chilean railway service.

The Congress adopted the final text of the Rules of the Federation, which embody a Declaration of Principles, a Statement of Aims and a Programme of Immediate Action which will be of interest to our readers. What follows is the full text of these three chapters.

Declaration of Principles.

The Railwaymen's Industrial Federation of Chile declares:

That the present regime, based on private property of the instruments and means of production, and the exploitation of man by man, which prevails in most countries of the world, should be replaced by a more equitable economic and social regime, which will assure to the individual man the full development of his creative faculties and to Humanity the normal unfolding of its progress.

That to fulfil the aspirations of the railwaymen of the country it is necessary to secure national unity in the ranks of the Railwaymen's Industrial Federation and international unity in the Confederation of Workers of Latin America, and fraternal relations with similar trade union organizations in other parts of the world, which will assure the future of all those who are exploited.

That fascism is the storming force of reactionary capitalism, the executor of all wars of conquest, a permanent threat to the freedom and independence of the peoples and therefore the greatest enemy of the workers; and that it should therefore be fought and repressed in all its forms, wherever it is to be found, by the united and vigorous action of the peoples, this being the only way in which we may be sure of a democratic world free from slavery.

That for the purpose of defeating fascism and oligarchic reaction, and furthering the economic and social progress of the country, the working class should ally itself with other groups and lead the struggle of all democratic and progressive forces which are interested in putting an end to all semi-feudal remnants and developing large-scale national industry, to make possible the aggrandizement of the Fatherland and assure the future welfare of the working classes.

Statement of Aims.

The following are the fundamental aims of the Railwaymen's Industrial Federation of Chile:

(a) The organization of all labourers and employees who work for the State and private railways, including pensioners, for the

defence of the interests of the corporation; having in view the ultimate achievement of a single organization for all railwaymen which shall recognize the class struggle, whatever may be the political, philosophical or religious tendencies of its members.

(b) The Railwaymen's Industrial Federation of Chile, affiliated to the Chilean Confederation of Workers, will maintain close relations of solidarity with all sister organizations on the Continent, and will further with all the means at its disposal the unity of the working class, nationally and internationally.

(c) The unity of all workers and peoples to win the war and crush fascism, maintaining their unity in victory and in the post-war period for the perfecting of democracy and the building of a better world, on the basis of a lasting peace, without fascism nor any regimes contrary to the popular will, so that the wage-earning classes may enjoy the liberties, work and welfare to which they are entitled.

(d) To assure and watch for the equitable exercise of trade union democracy in all organizations, maintaining constant respect for all minorities within the same. To maintain absolute independence politically, though without ignoring, as an organization based on the class struggle, such tendencies as may emanate from the parties of the working class, and especially from the organization itself.

(e) As one of the basic organizations in the Chilean Confederation of Workers, the Federation will encourage and watch for the carrying out of the decisions of this organization and its basic component parts, and will give all possible help in the organization of other groups of city and country workers.

Programme of Immediate Action.

In economic matters:

(a) The securing of a proper relation towards the cost of living and the reasonable needs of the labourers and employees, by the fixing of a sliding scale of wages and the stabilization of rent and the prices of staple articles.

(b) Adoption of means that will provide for the future of employees and their families in case of unemployment, encouraging in this connection the enactment by Parliament of appropriate measures.

(c) Establishment of the compulsory payment, at the end of each year, of a gratuity amounting to 20 per cent of the annual earnings, as an encouragement to creative and efficient work by the railwaymen.

(d) Full protection to women and young people in their work, establishing the principle of equal pay for equal work.

(e) The encouragement of a national campaign to deflate the currency, for the purpose of increasing the purchasing power of wages.

In social matters:

(a) Defence and perfecting of the democratic regime.

(b) Mobilization of all economic and financial resources for the defence of the country and better co-operation with the United Nations.

(c) Co-operation with the Government and all democratic groups to defend Democracy, extirpate the "fifth column" and win the war against fascism.

(d) Carrying out of the Rio de Janeiro decisions, and adhesion of Chile to the Atlantic Charter.

(e) Diplomatic and commercial relations with the Soviet Union.

(f) Repression of the many forms of fascist penetration in Chile, and confiscation of the property of Axis nationals.

(g) Setting up of a National Output Committee, on which the Railwaymen's Industrial Federation shall be directly represented, with a view to the strengthening of industrial development and increase of the output of the railways in the interests of the country, the harmonious settlement of labour disputes, raising of the standard of living of the railwaymen, and improvement of sanitation in workshops, roundhouses, etc.

(h) Improvement of present railway legislation, and enactment of other laws that will provide for the satisfaction of the immediate aims of the railwaymen, both labourers and employees, on all railways without exception.

(i) Direct representation on the Board of Management of the Railway Superannuation Fund, the members to be appointed by direct and democratic vote of the railwaymen, with mandates subject to revocation, under regulations to be drawn up by the Railwaymen's Industrial Federation.

(j) Encouragement of the development of co-operatives on the railways, and securing of the right of the shareholders to manage their own co-operatives.

(k) Democratization of the technological and administrative organs of the railways, providing for changes in the regulations that will give the personnel access to the same according to their capacities, length of service, etc.

(l) Securing of a decree that will make legal the organization of workers in the employ of the State, etc.

In matters of education and culture :

(a) The establishment of a Railway University in Santiago, and Railway Institutes in the several divisions and places where railwaymen work in large numbers.

(b) Support for the carrying out of the plan of elementary education and culture drawn up by the Chilean Teachers' Union, and approved by the second National Congress of the Chilean Confederation of Workers.

(c) Establishment of Popular Universities, with financial and technical assistance from the State, and also of travelling libraries throughout the railway system.

(d) Establishment of camp schools where both the theory and practice of railway work may be studied for periods of at least three months.

In matters of health :

(a) Extension and improvement of the Preventive Medicine Act, to cover not only sick labourers and employees, but also members of their families, guaranteeing them the means of livelihood, including food, clothing and housing.

(b) Establishment of Railway Hospitals in the several divisions, and sanatoria at the seaside and in mountainous and temperate regions, for the treatment of different ailments, and where employees can take a rest.

(c) Preparation of a National Housing Plan for the personnel, with participation by the railway undertaking, the Railway Superannuation Fund and our own organization, to meet the needs of both the personnel and the industry.

(d) Extension of the medical and sanitary service to the families of the railwaymen.

In addition to the Programme of Immediate Action embodied in the Rules, the Congress adopted a formidable list of 83 claims. It is impossible to quote all these here, but the following are interesting for the light they throw on railway and social conditions in Chile : That all work in excess of eight hours a day shall be regarded as overtime, payable at double rates, and that it shall in no case be compensated by other time off. That overtime be counted in reckoning superannuation. Allowance of 60 pesos a month for all railwaymen called up for military service. All employees and labourers to get the rate of wages of any man they replace. That men in the first and fifth divisions be paid for the time they lost through striking in sympathy with the seamen in November, 1943. That the basis of all increases in wages be identical for both employees and labourers. Payment for holidays to include the allowances for mileage, fuel saving bonus, etc. All men on a temporary basis to be entitled to the medical service and holidays with pay, and to be included in the establishment after six months' service. All grades of the personnel to be entitled to permanent free passes on payment of five pesos a month for third class and ten pesos for first class ; the money to be used for repairing and improving houses occupied by railwaymen. Requests for leave to be granted the day on which they are applied for, the twenty-four hour notice to be abolished, as also the seven peso stamp fee now required for such applications. Members of relief staff to be entitled to holidays after 270 days' work, instead of 312 as at present. If a new job is created, members of the staff in the department concerned to have an opportunity of qualifying for it ; in no case shall men be brought in from outside. Establishment of Boy Scout troops throughout the system for sons of employees ; the undertaking to supply the necessary equipment. Pro-

vision and equipment of sports grounds for railwaymen. In case of an employee being killed in the service, the pension to his family to be equal to his wages. Railwaymen's passes to give title to 30 per cent reduction on prices in dining cars. Compulsory superannuation after thirty years' service or on attaining 60 years of age ; any men kept on to be placed on a separate establishment. Family allowance for railwaymen's children to be continued until completion of studies. That no man shall be dismissed, except for specified reasons, until he has qualified for superannuation. Trade union officials to be immune from administrative punishment. Abolition of private railway contractors ; all work to be done directly by the Administration. Nationalization of all private railways. And finally, No. 83 : "In view of the democratic evolution through which we are now passing, as a result of the social progress of our people, it is absolutely necessary to replace all supervisors of reactionary mentality by others who are in harmony with present realities, which call for better understanding between supervisors and supervised, which will lead to better output." Consequently the Congress calls for the retirement from the service of thirteen higher officials who are specified by name.

The Work and Progress of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees and other Transport Workers—Continued from page 45

Executive Committee of the Congress. In addition officers and members of the Brotherhood have been appointed to a number of war-time boards dealing with labour matters, both administrative and advisory.

The Brotherhood has always adopted a progressive stand on the various issues of the day. This has been made evident in resolutions adopted at conventions, in public statements by its leaders and in its official journal. Following the endorsement of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (Canada's Labour Party) at the 1943 convention of the Canadian Congress of Labour—for which the Brotherhood's delegates voted—this attitude has taken on more concrete forms. A number of Divisions have already affiliated to the C.C.F., while others may be expected to do so. Already at least one member of the Brotherhood is a member of a provincial Legislative Assembly, elected on the C.C.F. ticket, another represents the C.C.F. on a school board in Winnipeg, a large western city, while many more have been and will be C.C.F. candidates in provincial and federal elections.

On the eve of victory, the Brotherhood stands stronger than it has ever been throughout its career. It faces the future determined, not only to continue its fundamental task of organizing and protecting the interests of transport workers, but to assist in the struggle for a better world for all workers in all countries. In the historic words of U.S. Vice-President Wallace : "We take up arms in the great war against starvation, unemployment, and the rigging of the markets of the world. We seek a peace that is more than just a breathing space between the death of an old tyranny and the birth of a new one." In that great war and for that peace the Brotherhood will never lay down its arms.

"Plain workaday people . . . are still demanding that the leaders of their Governments declare to them plainly what it is, exactly what it is, that they are seeking in this war, and what they think the items of the final settlement should be. They are not yet satisfied with what they have been told. They still seem to fear that they are getting what they ask for only in statesmen's terms."

President Wilson, September 27, 1918.

A REQUEST

We have completely exhausted our stock of the April-May 1941 number of our Journal, and should be exceedingly obliged to any reader who can spare us a copy. Kindly address to I.T.F., Crossland Fosse, Kempston, Bedford.

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 an article by P. M. Brown, entitled "What are we Heading For?" published in "The Canadian Railway Employees' Monthly."

The form as well as the extent of American intervention in European affairs is still fiercely disputed as far as it exceeds the purely military side of the present war. Why? Because the social implications of World War II are such that the economic ruling classes of the American people recognize the revolutionary content of the European war and therefore regard it with fear and distaste like a contagious disease. Insofar as they have accepted American intervention as an inevitable policy they are certainly more inclined to restore the "old order" than to help in the establishment of a new one. A very typical expression of this attitude can be found in an article in the "Saturday Evening Post":

"The confused American regarding himself as a defender of 'free enterprise' also finds a considerable propaganda not merely for destroying the military power of Germany but for using destruction of her military power as a pretext for destroying her industrial system as such. In other words, we are supposed . . . to be fighting to destroy in Germany the kind of economic set-up we defend in America."

This puts very nicely the dilemma of the capitalist classes in this war against Nazism. It is the old dilemma which was the basis of the appeasement policy towards Mussolini, Franco and Hitler. It is the dilemma of how to re-establish business with the German cartels, trusts and monopolies without having to fear the aggressions of a Hitler. The fact that the "military power" of Germany, i.e. nazism, is nothing but the outgrowth of Germany's "industrial system," i.e. monopoly capitalism, is either not recognized or willfully misunderstood. While in England an organized and politically conscious Labour movement, plus the deeply felt threat of Germany against British power, counterbalances to a very large extent the desire to restore the pre-Hitler order, no such counterbalance exists in the United States—at least none of sufficient power and influence. This restoration of the pre-Hitler order being, however, a practical impossibility, the fear of the revolutionary aftermath of the Nazi system hampers every attempt at the application of a practical policy towards Europe. There is no question of the sincerity of the Western Powers in their desire to restore political democracy in Europe. But there is certainly no desire to open the way for the forces of economic democracy without which no system of political democracy is able to survive.

We take our next quotation from an article in the British periodical "The Fortnightly," entitled "The Guardians of World Peace." The writer, J. Middleton Murry, noted for his challenging views on contemporary world problems, expresses in this article opinions on the decisive position of the Far East in relation to these problems. It is worth while taking note of his views, for if there is any truth in them, the international labour movement would have to make up its mind about them if it intends to pursue in the future a true international policy calculated to embrace so important a part of the world as the Far East. We have taken care in selecting the quotations and hope we have not done violence to the author's trend of thought.

"Self-government, as currently understood, is a conception derived entirely from the experience of the parliamentary democracies of the West. The probabilities are that it is worse than irrelevant to the masses of the Far East; it is full of peculiar

dangers for them. And it may well be that Russian Communism is better adapted, or better capable of adaptation, to their real needs. The endurance and cohesion of the Chinese Communist regime, blockaded though it has been by the forces of General Chiang Kai-Shek, suggests that a new and practicable system of government is being evolved, which is much more closely related to Russian Communism than our democratic systems. Moreover, it is now pretty generally accepted that the U.S.S.R., however serious its shortcomings when compared with the Western democracies, has done more for the advancement of its backward peoples in twenty years than either Britain or the U.S.A. has done for theirs in a hundred.

It would be disastrous if Britain and the U.S.A. were to constitute themselves the champions of an impracticable "democracy" against the adaptation of the Russian system to Eastern needs. Yet the danger that this may happen is considerable. . . . A struggle . . . for the political and economic control of Asia would be utterly calamitous. But it is by no means unthinkable. And the ideological banners under which it would be fought are ready to hand: Democracy versus Communism.

It would, therefore, seem imperative, if the continuing association of the British Empire and the United States is to fulfil its obvious historical mission to be the guardian of world-peace—that a really fundamental understanding between them both and the U.S.S.R. should be achieved, if it is at all possible. A mere *ad hoc* agreement on the immediate future of post-war Europe is wholly inadequate. Asia is the real crux. . . .

The problem (I believe) narrows down pragmatically to that of an agreement as to the future of China. If Britain and the U.S.A. support the claims of the China of General Chiang Kai-Shek as it is to-day, to be regarded as one of the Big Four, the chances of future conflict in the Far East will be enormously increased. But if General Chiang Kai-Shek can be persuaded, or compelled, to come to a firm agreement with the Chinese Communists, then a solid and practical foundation will have been laid for friendly collaboration between the U.S.A., Britain and Russia in the East. Also a pattern may be established in China for a positive solution of the problem of India.

At bottom, the future of the British Empire depends upon the nature of the coming adaptation of industrialism to the vast populations and ancient civilizations of the East. Ideally, that could be determined by a consensus between the U.S.A., Britain and Russia. But it is precisely on this matter (of the form of society required if industrialization is to work for the advantage of the common man) that the clash of views in the Big Three is notorious and open. . . . There is little doubt that Russia has evolved an adaptation of industrialism to the needs of Eastern peoples which is superior to any yet devised or contemplated by Britain or the U.S.A. . . .

The way of advance, therefore, should be by way of a genuine understanding with Russia based on an acknowledgment that it is Russia's historical mission to reconquer the East. The understanding would find practical expression in a real willingness to give material and moral help to Russia in this literally epoch-making task. That would involve the gradual and deliberate liquidation of the British Empire on the Asian mainland. It would have for its corollary a lessening of Russian pressure on Europe where her role is much less certainly that of a liberator: for the democratic idea is by now indigenous in Europe, and cannot be discarded (as the failure of Hitlerism has shown) without spiritual collapse. . . ."