

THE NEW REVIEW

Published Weekly at 150 Nassau St., New York City, by

NEW REVIEW PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

ALEXANDER FRASER
PRESIDENT

MOSES OPPENHEIMER
TREASURER

JOSEPH MICHAEL
SECRETARY

SUBSCRIPTION, \$2.00 PER YEAR \$1.00 SIX MONTHS FOREIGN, \$2.50
SINGLE COPY 5 CENTS

Entered at the New York Post Office as second-class mail matter.

The following articles are among those that will appear in future issues of the NEW REVIEW:

The Socialist Situation in Massachusetts by Rev. Roland D. Sawyer; Walt Whitman in France, by Charles Vildrac; Social Classes in the United States, by Isaac Halevy; Tabooed Aspects of Suffrage Discussion, by Theodore Schroeder; Present State of French Socialism, by Paul Louis, of Paris; The Panama Canal, by Michael Pavlovitch, of Paris; Charpentier, Musical Anarch and Labor Agitator, by André Tridon; Direct Action and Sabotage, by Moses Oppenheimer; Facts for International Socialists, by Dora B. Montefiore, of London; The Flower of the Selva, a Tale of the Upper Amazon, by W. E. Hardenburg; Syndicalism and Mass Action, by Austin Lewis.

The New Review

Copyrighted by New Review Publishing Association, 1913. Reprint permitted provided credit is given.

Vol. I.

JANUARY 18, 1913

No. 3

THE GARMENT WORKER'S STRIKE

With every day that passes the "general strike" of the garment workers of New York is becoming more general, their "mass action" more massive. The attempt of the "disinterested" gentlemen of the Chamber of Commerce to paralyze the strike and demoralize the strikers has signally failed. It failed just as completely and ignominiously as the futile attempts of the European Powers to preserve peace and maintain the "status quo" in the Balkans. If this war between those who clothe the world and those who levy tribute on the world's clothes is to have any meaning, it must be pushed with all possible vigor up to the point where the superiority of either side is decidedly established. If the strikers had permitted the intervention of a third party and the suspension of hostilities before the relative strength of the contending parties had been measured in the shock of battle, they would have thereby confessed their own weakness. And if at any future stage of the conflict a third party is permitted to intervene, mediate or arbitrate, as has been the case in so many recent conflicts between labor and capital, it will simply mean that the workers are not yet strong enough to overcome all opposition and crush the enemy. But at least there will then have taken place an actual trial of strength, and its results will be embodied in the terms of the truce.

While this is being written we learn of a new attempt that is being made to arrange an armistice. An association of so-called independent manufacturers in the clothing industry is offering an immediate partial increase in wages in order to induce the strikers to resume work, while all other questions in dispute are to be submitted to a conference committee and a board of arbitration. Rivalries and dissensions appear to have broken out in the camp of the employers. It is therefore to be hoped that these dissensions will be utilized to the utmost in the interest of the workers, just as the Socialist parties throughout the world have always striven to turn the conflicts of interests among the various capitalist groups and parties to the advantage of the working class.

From the very beginning of this strike the employers have tried to gain public sympathy for themselves by raising the cry that if wages are raised the price of clothes will have to be raised correspondingly. This claim is worth looking into, however briefly. If the clothing industry were as perfect a monopoly as, for example, the anthracite industry, the claim might hold true, though even then only within certain impassable limits, for even a monopoly is not free to raise prices *ad libitum*, without considering all the conditions of the market. To raise prices to such an extent as to reduce consumption very materially, encourage the utilization of substitutes, and thus cut very considerably into the total annual profit, is a luxury that even a perfect monopoly cannot freely indulge in. But unfortunately for the clothing manufacturers, they are by no means in the fortunate situation of monopolists. Their industry is subject to severe competition and the increase in wages may be taken out of their profits. To be sure, if the prevailing rate of profit in the clothing industry were, owing to the increase of wages, to be reduced below the average rate of profit for all industries, and if in addition the manufacturers could not compensate themselves for the higher wages through the introduction of improved processes of production, then capital would tend to emigrate from the clothing industry into other industries and the prices of clothes would tend to increase until the rate of profit was equalized. But there is no good reason for entertaining either of these assumptions. The clothing industry of this city has produced a very large number of millionaires, many who have entered the industry as poor men have grown very rich, and this does not indicate an abnormally low rate of profit. On the other hand, the technical conditions of the industry are known to be very backward, largely owing to the prevailing low wages, and a substantial increase of wages in every branch of the industry would surely act as a spur to the introduction of machinery and improved and more economical methods of production. And higher processes of production would, in their turn, become the foremost agency for putting an end to the sweat-shop evil.

The strikes of the workers in the great clothing industry of this city reveal a peculiar physiognomy. The complaint has been repeatedly made that these workers have altogether too many strikes and that they do not in quiet times make the sacrifices necessary for maintaining a strong organization, which would, by its very existence, preclude the necessity for so many strikes. The facts are as stated, but the complaint is unjust. The undeveloped technical conditions of the industry, the resulting presence of thousands of small bosses and contractors who act as middlemen between the real capitalist employers and the workers, the prevalence of tenement house work, the relatively unskilled nature of

the labor—all these factors tend to make the task of organization in the clothing industry an extremely difficult one. Hence the strike becomes here doubly and trebly necessary—not only, as in other cases, to wrest concessions from the employers; not only to rejuvenate and strengthen the organization, so that it is not the organization which supports the strike, but the strike which infuses fresh life into the organization; but also, in large part, to fulfill the functions of the organization as such. The explosive force of the strike must replace the want of momentum in the organization.

But even in this peculiar form the ever-growing, ever expanding force of the class struggle of the workers manifests itself. Strikes in the clothing industry have for many years past been recurring with the regularity of the seasons. But each successive strike is more general than the preceding ones, affects more branches of the industry, embraces many more thousands of workers, and leaves after it as a residue a stronger organization to serve as a nucleus and rallying point for future struggles. What thus takes place is not a mere recurrence or simple repetition, but a real evolution, effected through a series of comparatively small but none the less painful revolutions. And yet these methods have been adopted and these results brought about without any preconceived theory, but through the spontaneous efforts of the workers to resist the depressing tendencies of capitalist production and to obtain decent living conditions. The garment workers and their leaders have never maintained that the methods which circumstances have compelled them to adopt are the best and most appropriate for the entire labor movement, nor have they asserted that these methods, and these alone, lead straight to the social revolution. Nevertheless the entire labor movement may draw useful lessons from the methods and experiences of the garment workers.

TWO PROTESTS

Socialists are not in the habit of praising either our strenuous ex-President or the President of the American Federation of Labor. It is our duty this week to speak well of both of them.

In the State of Idaho the Progressive ticket was kept off the official ballot in the late election by a fiat of the courts. Mr. Roosevelt issued a statement denouncing this action. The statement was published in a Progressive paper of that state, whereupon the editor and publishers of the paper were clapped into jail and fined \$500 each for *lese majesté*—beg pardon, for contempt of court.

But Mr. Roosevelt, who was something of a "majesty" himself not so very long ago, does not permit himself to be cowed even by the highest act of arbitrary power. In a characteristic message