

# FRANCE AN UNDEVELOPED COUNTRY

(Note by Editor—The following is part of Fellow Worker Foster's account of the French railway strike, dealing with its close, and the alleged defeat of the strikers. It seems the strike was not as extensive as reported in the American press, only two roads being tied up. Following the mobilization order by Premier Briand, and the campaign of lying by the capitalist papers, the strikers started to break ranks, and the strike committee, in order to save the organization, called the strike off. That appears to have been excellent tactics, and the effect of the strike was in fact a victory. The employers have promised to grant to grant the increase in wages demanded, to take effect Jan. 1. On account of the length of our correspondent's letter, we omit the details of the affair, and publish only that part which refers to the industrial and political situation in France.)

Paris, Oct. 20, 1910.

Although France is rated as one of the greatest of capitalist countries, her industries have not reached such a high state of development as have those of either England, Germany or the United States. In fact, France still is a typical middle class country, and exhibits the same phenomena that all countries in this stage of development do.

Compared to the highly developed methods of production in the United States, small production may be said to reign supreme in French industry. Except in very rare instances capital has not yet grouped itself so as to produce the powerful monopolies and ultra capitalists so common in the United States.

The working class simply reflects the development of the capitalist class. The thousands of petty merchants, manufacturers, farmers, etc., have not yet been pushed down into the working class, where they will go when the ultra capitalists get more power. Until this takes place, French society will not have the capitalist and working classes so clearly marked economically—nor socially—as they are in the United States.

### Strong Government.

From this middle class society comes the government, representing of course only the interests of the capitalist or master class, such as it is. This government is strong, and its mandates are obeyed not only by the workers, but also by the capitalists themselves—excepting of course in the case of those laws whose application would benefit the workers, these being "sabotaged" by the masters in the orthodox way. This is because no small clique of capitalists has yet acquired sufficient power to set aside the laws of the rest of the capitalist class, such as we see the trusts doing in the United States. These latter have reduced the United States government to simply a toy in their hands, and, in consequence, it and its laws have suffered a great loss of prestige amongst all classes. An American court or legislature is becoming to mean to even the working a grafting institution entitled to no respect whatever.

But this fuller development of capitalism has not yet taken place to any appreciable extent in France, and the government and its functionings still reflect the wishes of the mass of the comparatively embryonic capitalist class. Of course the vast majority of the workers are deluded with the belief that this government represents their interests also, and seeing the capitalist respecting the laws—at least to a much greater extent than in the United States—they proceed to follow suit. As a class, they consider law as a sort of sacred command to be implicitly obeyed. If the law seems hard, they can change it, etc.

### Intense Patriotism.

Again, patriotism in France is of the most virile type, of a sort of "do or die" order. The Franco-German war is not yet finished. According to all the capitalist papers the Germans are ever knocking at the gates of France. A moment's lack of vigilance will put France beneath the hated yoke of Germany. To prevent this terrible calamity an intense patriotic campaign is continually carried on. Certain journals and magazines devote themselves to it entirely. Floods of literary tears are shed over the sad fate of the lost provinces of Alsace-Lorraine. These must be won at any price. The same thing is done for the glory lost (war) and the stain on France's glory thus removed. Paid patriots rack their brains to devise mushy poetry to decorate the sickly sentimental patriotic post

# I. W. W. PREAMBLE

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trades unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wages for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the every-day struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Knowing, therefore, that such an organization is absolutely necessary for our emancipation we unite under the following constitution.

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Of course the government takes part in this laudable work, and not only hammers patriotism into the millions of impressionable young men during the two years they must serve in the army, but also whenever opportunity presents itself it educates the general public. Here are a couple of instances out of many: At the Place de la Concorde, at intervals about the square are placed large statues representing the principal cities of France. The one dedicated to Strasbourg (principal city of the ceded territory) is kept continually covered with flowers to show France's constant sense of loss. The effect is obvious. Again, at the vast museums of The Invalides, France officially weeps over the sad disgrace of the Franco-German war, and one can see hundreds of workers gazing at the relics of the war, and, no doubt, imbuing much of the spirit they are intended to engender.

The extent of this systematic campaign of patriotism is difficult of comprehension by an American accustomed to his garden variety of bragging patriotism. The effect of it on the workers must be profound. The working class children playing at military games, fencing, singing songs to the tunes of bugle calls, etc. To offset this patriotic campaign, the syndicalists carry on a vig-

orous anti-patriotic propaganda.

### The Working Class Movement.

Another factor in the French social situation is the peculiar nature of the working class movement.

The working class movements of the world may be classed under three general heads: First, those that are being retarded by their "leaders." Second, those that are developing freely, their "leaders" keeping pace with them or even stimulating them in their course. Third, those that are being really "led" or educated by their "leaders."

The American labor movement, or A. F. of L., is perhaps the best example of the first class. The various unions composing it are reactionary and the cliques controlling them are doing their best to keep them so. Time after time these cliques have frustrated the attempts of progressive members of the rank and file to make the organizations more in accord with modern conditions. So strongly are the cliques entrenched that in all likelihood their organizations must perish, being incapable of evolution. This movement accepts capitalism as a fact, and uses legal tactics.

Germany, the home of Marxism, exhibits, perhaps, the best example of a labor

(Continued on Page Four.)

(Continued From Page Three.)

movement in the second class. There we see the organized working class following its own natural bent, forming bread and butter direct action organizations, but depending for final emancipation upon the enticing ballot, which the workers have not yet come to understand. A movement accepting the government, as an institution, and employing only legalized tactics in its daily struggles. The movement is being encouraged in this course by its political socialist leaders—whether from selfish motives or not is a matter of question.

The C. G. T. of France furnishes the almost unique example of a labor movement of our third class—one that is being "led" or "steered," a labor movement in the hands of men who are doing all in their power to keep it from following the natural course of the German movement. They are attempting to force the French labor movement to do for itself what the capitalists did for themselves in Japan. Simply by profiting by the experience of others, they avoided the long, slow evolutionary process of industrial development, and took a revolutionary short cut to the desired end. They skipped a rung in the evolutionary ladder, and became a modern capitalist class almost over night.

The anti-statist leaders of the C. G. T. would have the French labor movement act as intelligently. Perceiving the worldwide, disastrous effects of governmental interference in working class affairs, and the futility of the working class trying to in any way derive benefit from this capitalist institution, they are advocating the abstention of the working class from all political activity, and the adoption of the dreaded direct action tactics entirely. The government's laws should be entitled to no more consideration than the rules of the factory; if they oppress the workers, it is the workers' privilege to break them in any manner in which they see fit or are able to. This contempt for the "sacred" government has outlawed the anti-statist leaders of the C. G. T., and with them the organization of which they are undoubtedly shaping the policies.

Thus we have the outlawed French labor movement, dominated by "dangerous leaders" who are attempting to force a largely reluctant and ignorant rank and file to adopt the most approved methods of class warfare.

W. Z. FOSTER.