

### The Independent Labor Party of Great Britain

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD in The Nation.

The independent labor party is for the moment the red rag to the bull of ordinary British opinion. For years it has been the subject of almost daily attack in the newspapers—especially the Northcliffe and Hulton journals—and the method pursued has been a repetition almost unvaried in language, of certain cheap misrepresentations designed to rouse passionate prejudice. The party, however, neither decays nor dies, and an explanation of its position may not lack interest for readers of the Nation. It is a socialist party, and must not be confused with the labor party, with which, however, it is affiliated, and with

which it acts for electoral purposes. Its parliamentary candidates, for instance, are run in the general list of candidates for which the labor party is responsible. Its socialism is not of the dogmatic type. It believes in the collective control of land and capital, but it interprets itself as a continuation of British liberal tradition, and connects its economic and industrial theories with the British trade union movement. Evolution is the breath of its life. When it was started a quarter of a century ago, chiefly by the efforts of the late Mr. Keir Hardie, it had a clear conception of a goal—socialism; and an equally clear conception of a method

—the welding of the working class, especially the trade unionists, into a political party separate from the other parties.

After strenuous work, generally of the nature of attack upon old leaders like Ben Pickard, C. Fenwick, and J. Broadhurst—it swung the British trade unions around into politics, and formed the labor party. When the war broke out it took up an attitude which exposed it to the widest ravings of misrepresentation and calumny; its total destruction under the wrath of popular passion and the repressive action of the government was confidently expected; it is recorded by some sections of the labor party as something of a sorry ducking of imperishable persistence and of unpopular activity. Yet the party leaders, have never forfeited their personal power, within the councils of the working classes, or the confidence reposed in them, and in all conferences held throughout the war years, the curious spectacle was uniformly witnessed of the unpopular and maligned leaders receiving the most enthusiastic outpourings of welcome from delegates who proceeded later on to vote against them.

Meanwhile, the party itself, after the first rending turmoil of the outbreak of the war, began to right itself. Its public meetings were always crowded, and a campaign to smash them up was started by certain London newspapers. The situation was handled by the independent labor party leaders with a deft skill, and the propaganda of the party was continued through every channel that could be kept open. Twelve times was its printing business raided, but the results were always futile. The leaders were beset by "agents provocateurs," but arrests were confined to the less known men, although police agents were present at all meetings. An official report once leaked with me about a slight error in an allusion I made in one of my speeches, and gave me to understand that verbatim reports were supplied to Whitehall to be carefully scrutinized.

The membership of the party steadily increased, its recruits coming mainly from the young element of democracy and from that which is animated by political liberalism, and from those deeply sincere, religious minds which find their companionship in the Society of Friends. On its economic and militant side it has drawn to it the men and women—mostly young—who are influenced by the revolutionary thought which many those controlling and co-ordinating forces which relate revolution to progress, and give dramatic change an evolutionary method. On its political side, it has drawn from the liberal party many of its devoted workers. The transferred allegiance of Mr. Ponsbury, Mr. Trevelyan, K. C. Lambert and, within the last few days, Colonel Wedgwood, M. P., is only representative of transferees of less conspicuous, but in their own feelings not less important, personages from John o' Groat's to Land's End.

I write while the chairman of the party is delivering his annual address to the delegates assembled in the Huddersfield town hall. In the crowded galleries, one feels the impetuous surge of the spirit which possesses this party. One feels that its defiance is of the soul and not of the lip, and one understands how it is that this apparent handful of people has defied popular opinion, has influenced hearts when it does not seem to have influenced policy, and has increased its following all the time. The Huddersfield conference is attended by 360 delegates, and the report presented to them records during the last year an increase of 11,000 members, 129 branches, and 4,200 in fees. There are now 783 branches of the party, 330,000 were raised for the recent general election, and of this nearly £3,000 remain expended ready for further fights, while another reserve fund, also amounting to nearly £3,000, is in existence; 13 organizers are at work in the country. All these figures reach points never hitherto touched by the party, and set a much-needed example to other political parties to publish their financial resources.

The party's position on the war has always been misrepresented. It was "pro-German"; it consisted of "the agents of the Kaiser"; and what not. The truth was that it was simply democratic and international. Despite what is said to the contrary, it took with it the overwhelming majority of British socialists. In Great Britain, as everywhere else, the windy, strutting sections of socialists, who use strong language as a substitute for strong opinions, became chauvinist, and gave voice to the wildest passions and prejudices of the crowd, enjoying in consequence an immediate respectability to which they were unaccustomed, but which they found delectable. Almost with that sole exception the British socialists followed the independent labor party.

The I. L. P.—as the party is commonly called—took the political view of war. War was the breakdown of the sickly machine of diplomacy, the natural and inevitable consequence of policy; fighting had to be conducted by political as well as by military weapons, by public opinion as well as by shot and shell. For instance when the Russian revolution came, the independent labor party, in parliament and out, begged the government to regard it as an opportunity by which to get the human democracy rather than as one to constitute a Russian offensive; victory was to be the freeing of democracy, not the destruction of any people, and certainly not the partitioning of Europe for purposes of revenge, imperialism, or militarism. I admit that this has an angle of vision most annoying to a public which had been seized by the ordinary old passions of war. It seemed to be treason, because it represented war and its problems in a relationship which the man in the street and his newspaper could not understand. But, whatever the immediate incidents which caused the outbreak of the war, and whatever the emotions which stirred the people when got into it, the party believed that it saw the government entering another great conflict through which it was to go in precisely the same way that governments had gone through wars before. In every political writer who had lived through such times, from Aristophanes to Bellinghame and Cobden, it read of the dangers,

the mistakes and the disappointments which were ahead. When, in course of the years, it was seen how the war was commanding every resource of the nations, the party pointed out—and therefore gave more offense—that a party military and would come, if it came at all, only after revolution had been made inevitable, only after the very foundations of society had been displaced. I doubt if ever there was such a series of political predictions fulfilled with such completeness. But under the wrath of popular passion at every stage it proposed a policy, based always upon the fundamental assumption that the peoples concerned had to understand one another, and that, in consequence, some international meeting like the Stockholm one should be held. To win the war for democracy and to secure for democracy that power which would be the condition from which the war sprang—that, in a sentence, was the policy of the independent labor party and the key to all that is said and did during the war and the armistice period. That may be a position intellectually and emotionally too detached for the crowds in the armies at war to appreciate. Cobden may have been right in saying that when cannons speak everything else must speak in the same way, or keep silent. Week after week, Lord Morley impressed upon me the doctrine of "iron silence." Be that as it may, there always will be during every war some patriots who will fear for their minds clear of the battle and smoke, and view war in its political completeness—and I suppose, so long as wars are fought, the consequences to them will be what they have been to us. In any event, England will always be grateful that Cobden discovered the wisdom of silence only after he had committed the folly of speech.

The internal politics of the party suffer from the revolutionary sentiments of the time. The recent election has dealt a stunning blow to parliamentarianism in Great Britain. The appeal was so false, and the result so disproportionate to the voting, that confidence in representative democracy has been shaken; and the admission is general that the personnel of the parliament is sadly deteriorated. Quite aside from this, the party would have experienced trouble with a left wing. When the jazz music of revolution is playing all over Europe, there are feet here that must trip to it, even if the dance is not native to us.

The industrial strike for political purposes is a very old idea. It was revived by the modern movement of syndicalism in France; it was encouraged by the failure of the labor party after 1906 to effect dramatic changes in politics; since the war, the strike and the threat to strike have won enormous advantages for labor, even when the trade-union officials were opposed to any action of the kind. The industrial or "direct" action has therefore come to the center of the stage of British labor politics.

Moreover, two movements have given it a new authority. The national trade guilds have been battling at parliament as the represent-

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### MOONEY STRIKE

(Unions who vote on the Mooney strike are requested to furnish results of the balloting to The Bulletin for publication.—Ed.)  
Results, so far as The Bulletin has learned, are:

- IN FAVOR:**  
Plumbers.  
The Bakers.  
The Painters.  
Tailors, 3 to 1.  
Barbers, 3 to 1.  
Laundry Workers.  
Plasterers, 2 to 1.  
Electricians No. 65.  
Plasterers, unanimous.  
Bricklayers, unanimous.  
Hodcarriers, unanimous.  
Silver Bow Trades and Labor Assembly.  
Pearse-Connelly club, unanimously.  
Mill, Smelter and Surface Workers, unanimous.  
Metal Mine Workers' Union of America, unanimous.  
Workingmen's Union, 68 to 58.  
Wood, Wire and Metal Lathers' International Union No. 69, unanimously.  
Workers', Soldiers' and Sailors' voted unanimously for Mooney strike.

- AGAINST:**  
Engineers.  
Rubber and Tireworkers' union, 13 to 2.

at the state as the absolute authority in a nation. They argued that the workers as workers had to create something like an industrial legislature with authority over industrial affairs, because geographical areas, called constituencies, full of a medley of electors removed in mind and in interests from the problems of the workshop, could never create a body of representatives whose industrial mind would be sufficiently definite to make it a satisfactory authority to deal with the real life of the people.

Then came the Russian soviets and the role of the workers secured by the disfranchisement of all those who did not work. To industrial democrats here, this method of government causes less shock than might be imagined. For up to the present time our house of commons has been elected by a franchise which deprived millions of workmen of the right to vote, and our house of lords is the purest example of a soviet which the world has ever seen—a soviet, however, not of the workers, but of the aristocracy.

The independent labor party is therefore peculiarly exposed to the movements for the political strike and for the reconstruction of our constitution on soviet models. These movements, however, do not really go deep. The party may occasionally relieve its feelings by passing pious resolutions of challenge and defiance; in practical action it will continue to follow its leaders, none of whom are bitten by these projects, all of whom believe in parliamentary democracy.

Still, the party will undoubtedly respond to industrial movements. This country today is spending enormous sums of money to keep its people quiet and to try to tide over the transition period between war and peace; tomorrow it will have to pay its debts. Today, promises may be made to pay high wages; tomorrow, means will have to be found for providing them. Yesterday, we were told there was unemployment because there was overproduction; today, we are told that more production will prevent unemployment; tomorrow, we shall have to face the problem. All this is to mean industrial unsettlement. Under such conditions, the sagacity of the party will be taxed to the utmost, and its allegiance to parliamentary methods will be tested under a terrible strain.

I believe it will emerge successfully from its ordeal; for our intelligent young workmen are coming into its ranks, and its older leaders have given it a spirit and a tradition. In any event, the party is steadily returning to its old commanding place in the labor movement, and the storm-tossed adventures through which it passed during the war will only add to the respect in which it is held and the authority which it is to wield.

### NORTHWEST NEWS

(By United Press.)  
Spokane, June 23.—William H. Dietz, formerly coach of the Washington State college football team, and coach of the Mare Island Marines' eleven last season, went on trial here today on a charge of making false statements in executing his draft questionnaire, upon which he was exempted from military service. It is contended by the government that "Lunestarr" Dietz is not an Indian, as he stated in his questionnaire, and as he has been generally recognized during his football coaching career in the west.

Eugene, Ore., June 23.—The University of Oregon summer school opened here today, under the direction of Dr. H. D. Sheldon, dean of the school of education.

Following the regular term of the school, ending Aug. 1, will be a second term, the aim of which is to give returned soldiers additional opportunity to make up lost time in academic work while in the service.

A number of courses dealing with post-war reconstruction work will be given during the first session of the summer school.



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