

# INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM AND THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

By J. T. MURPHY.

War and revolution have shattered many things besides cathedrals and thrones.

Old theories of social development were blown to the winds with the first shot of the world war. What were considered up-to-date notions of progressive development went the way of the obsolete with the bursting forth of the world revolution in 1917.

Even the professed revolutionists have had to shift their ground and review afresh the relationship of their ideas on industrial organisation to the achievement of a social revolution.

The class struggle has been proclaimed, Industrial Unionism has been advocated, and a variety of methods adopted to achieve the organisation desired. But in most cases it has been assumed that before a revolution could be achieved it would be essential for the working class to adopt Industrial Unionism.

History has proved this idea to be as wrong in experience as the theory that it would be necessary for all countries to go through a stage of highly-developed Industrial Capitalism prior to a revolution leading to Socialism.

Industrial Unionism is a theory of organisation arrived at as a result of the examination of industry, and a consideration of what would be the most effective manner of waging the conflict against the Capitalist class.

That this theory has contributed valuable assistance to the workers in their struggle none can dispute.

But it must never be forgotten that organisation is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end: a weapon, something with which to wage a fight for an objective other than itself.

However desirable a perfect weapon may be, we are compelled by the force of circumstances to accept the weapon which history provides.

The economic antagonisms in society provide the impelling force which drives us to fight. The conception of a new social order derived from human experience and demanding a social revolution provides us with the objective which must be the determinant of the nature of our activities in the fight.

The failure of many industrial unionists to appreciate these facts has stultified their activities.

A subject class cannot choose either the ideal moment to move or the ideal weapon with which to fight.

Its subjection compels a continuous struggle against odds.

Such has been the struggle of the working class throughout its history. Hampered by its wide distribution, its lack of consciousness of itself as a class, disintegrated by a multitude of minor interests, it has fought onward through the years.

It has never yet set out to achieve anything as an organised class, and never will do, so long as it is a subject class.

Such a movement pre-supposes a general intellectual revolution prior to a social revolution, the thinking in terms of a new order not yet in existence.

Mankind does not act in this manner. Its movements are urged by its elemental needs, and when any social order fails to meet them, it is superseded by another.

The mass moves intuitively in response to the pressure of circumstances and is launched into revolutionary deeds, unconscious of the fact that they are revolutionary.

It does not follow from these observations that none are conscious of the direction of these movements. But it does follow that they who are conscious of the direction in which things are moving, and are confessedly out to achieve a

**Continued on back page.**



# INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM AND THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION.

Continued from page 1322.

social revolution, have before them a clearly defined responsibility, *i.e.*, to harness these intuitive movements of the masses that they may lead to social revolution.

When the masses move it is useless to tell them they cannot do anything until they have embraced industrial unionism.

Certainly it is all to the good for industrial unionist ideas on organisation to be applied. The masses, however, will not move because they are industrial unionists or trade unionists, but on account of the pressure of circumstances. Under such stress they will use any organisation, old or new.

The movement of the masses towards socialism is the thing that matters.

The value of all ideas on organisation will be tested by the degree to which they can be applied in a crisis, in a revolutionary transition, and in the maintenance of the revolutionary victory.

A year of revolution will teach the masses more of industrial organisation than fifty years of propaganda.

Social Revolution should be the objective determining our activities.

Industrial Unionism should be the armour from which can be drawn valuable ideas to help in the conflict.

Industrial and political crises should be regarded as the revolutionary situations to be harnessed for social revolution.