

**CAPITALIST REFORMS.**

On the Statute books of New Brunswick there are no efficient laws to protect employees from accident and death while working; none to make the employer sufficiently careful of his operatives' interests. Last year, the Fabian League (a socialist, but scarcely socialist, organization founded in St. John in March, 1902) asked for an Employers' Liability Bill along similar lines to the Acts already in force in Britain and other countries. The government took the matter into consideration, deprecated haste, and promised to do something the next year. Accordingly, this year, the Attorney General introduced a lengthy and imposing bill which, on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread, was accepted as temporarily satisfactory by the Fabian League and the Trade and Labor Council. The proposed law was quite stringent in some respects, but on the main points was inclined to be lax. Its conservative tendency was well shown in the clause relating to child labor. That clause provided that no child under 16 years of age should be employed in a factory "unless he was strong and healthy and his work was necessary to supply his parents' need." A clause more elastic than this could not have been desired even by a South Carolina mill owner. Still the Act did not suit the manufacturers and millers of the province, and the Government did not press the measure to a final vote. It compromised on the appointment of a commission to prepare a new Act—the usual way of killing anything beneficial to the working classes. The personnel of this commission has just been announced. It is to consist of three employers of labor, one representative of union labor and one of women's societies. Thus the preparation of an Act to protect workmen is entrusted to a commission at least three-fifths capitalist. The result of their deliberations can be easily anticipated.

This neutralizing of important reforms by capitalist influence has long been carried on. How many years longer will workmen submit to it?

In 1833, after many years of agitation whole-hearted humanitarians for freedom, the slaves in the British Empire were freed. But the freedom was only partial; for while personal servitude seemed to be abolished, the freed man was given no land. He, therefore, was compelled to remain on the estate of his former owner to work for whatever wages the white man chose to give. The latter, no longer responsible for the negro's care in infancy and old age, and certain of being able to replace him when he became weak or old, gained financially by the overthrow of slavery. And while the black's social standing was raised considerably by the change, the practical advantages gained were few. Similarly in the U.S.A. in 1865. The capitalist influence of the North, which helped to emancipate the slave in order to break the South's monopoly of cheap labor, was not prepared to give the negro land and thereby make him economically independent. It preferred to keep him landless, thus merely transforming him from a chattel-slave to a wage-slave—a gain,

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it is true, but far from what it should have been.

So in Russia in 1861. Driven by public opinion, the government freed the serfs, and gave them back their land—apparently. But the nobles were to be compensated for their loss of the serfs. The latter were to repay them by a mortgage on the land. This mortgage was so heavy that only the interest has been paid, and the peasants are still practically landless.

Canadian public opinion in 1878 demanded local option prohibition of the liquor traffic. While appearing to grant the demand, the Government gave us an Act which allows the importation of liquor into counties supposed to be under prohibition. The brewers and distillers managed that in ways unknown to the average voter.

The time has come for the workers of all countries to cease expecting any real reform from any Government controlled by capitalists. Where the money interest reigns, reform measures are always killed or so deformed as to be useless. If the workers would be free, they must cease to support any and all capitalist parties and rally around the socialist party—the only one that will not betray their interests. Real reforms granted by the old parties are soon rendered ineffective by not being enforced. Only the complete revolution that will be brought about by a majority of ballots cast for socialism will work the laborer any permanent benefit.

HENRY HARVEY STUART.

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