

# WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

## IN SOVIET RUSSIA

(Editors Note:—This is the fourth of a series of special articles which Mr. Foster was commissioned to write for The Federated Press. Previous stories told of social conditions in the Russia of today.)

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER, Federated Press Staff Writer.  
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Moscow.—In the restricted confines of a newspaper article only the barest sketch of the Russian government can be given.

The first thing we must understand is that the new Russian government is really a workers' republic. Its motto, written into the constitution, is "He who does not work neither shall he eat." Work is the standard by which the status of the people is established. All soldiers and workers (hand and brain, city and country) over the age of eighteen years and regardless of sex, are entitled to vote and to hold office. Capitalists and others living from the labor of workers are disfranchised and denied all participation in the government.

Some American labor leaders have affected to be horrified by this arrangement and have denounced the Russian republic roundly for it. They demand a "square deal" for the social parasites. But they conveniently overlook the fact that in the so-called capitalist democracies these same parasitic elements disfranchise the useful workers as far as they are able to. They set up all sorts of residence, sex and other ridiculous voting qualifications that deprive millions of toilers of any say in the government. And if it were not for the constant resistance of the labor movement it would not be long before the suffrage would be limited solely to property holders.

Now the revolutionary Russian workers have no illusions about these matters. They have taken the measure of the capitalists. They know them for what they are—an unscrupulous band of exploiters who will stick at nothing in their greed for mastery. So the workers tell them outright that their activities are anti-social, and that if they want to enjoy the rights accorded decent people they must abandon their nefarious conduct and perform some useful work in return for their sustenance. If they will not do this then they must expect to be considered social and political pariahs.

The foundation of the whole Russian governmental system is founded by the local Soviets. These exist in all the cities, towns and villages. They are made up of representatives of the three great branches of the Russian working-class: workers, peasants and soldiers. There are no general elections as Americans understand the term. The workers select their Soviet representatives directly at their work-places, the peasants theirs at the villages, and the soldiers theirs in the barracks. Officials and delegates may be recalled at any time by those who elected them.

The work of the local Soviets is to supervise the social, political and industrial life of the people within their respective jurisdictions, bearing in mind, of course, the superior authority of higher governmental organs. The scope of their activity ranges from the simple work of a village Soviet to the complex tasks of the great city Soviets. In Moscow, for instance, the Soviet consists of 21 departments, as follows: Justice, Finance, Military, Postal, Industry, Fuel, Food (securing of supplies), Land, Compulsory Labor, Public Service (water, lights, street cars, etc.), Education, Labor, Health, Social Welfare, General Management (police, prisons, marriages, deaths, etc.), Statistical Workers' and Peasants' Control (supervisory), Transportation, Building, Food (distribution), Extraordinary Commission (prevention of counter-revolutionary activities, etc.). All these departments are subdivided into bureaus which specialize in the thousand and one activities that go to make up the life of a great modern city.

By a complicated process, impossible to detail here, the local Soviets, both urban and rural, pyramid themselves together, securing organization and homogeneity to correspond with the various geographical, industrial and political divisions of the country. Thus Soviets extend over the volosts, districts, governments and regions, which roughly parallel our wards, counties, congressional districts and states. Each of these organizations oversees the activities in its particular sphere, limited naturally by the functions of the Soviets above and below it. In every case the higher form of organization is created by massing together representatives directly selected from the membership of the one just below. The recall principle prevails at all stages of the governmental structure.

The general Soviet system secures unified national expression through the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. This is the supreme governmental

body of the Russian Republic. It meets approximately every six months. Between congresses business is conducted by the Central Executive Committee, which is composed of 550 members elected from among the general delegation of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

The Central Executive Committee, in turn, elects from its ranks the Council of Peoples' Commissioners to actually superintend the carrying on of the business of the country. There are eighteen of these commissioners, to correspond to the following departments; Foreign Affairs, War, Marine, Interior, Justice, Labor, Social Insurance, Education, Posts and Telegraph, Nationality Affairs (the Russian republic is a federation of many nationalities), Finances, Transportation, Agriculture, Commerce and Industry, Provisioning, Control of the Government (supervision), Supreme Economic Council, Public Hygiene. The work of the Council of Peoples' Commissioners is subject to the veto of the Central Executive Committee, which, together with the Council of Peoples' Commissioners, and all other government bodies, is responsible to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

In the United States we see the ridiculous spectacle of thousands of legislators making laws all over the country, and a handful of old fogies in the Supreme Court calling them unconstitutional. There is no such nonsense in Russia. Once the workers' government has spoken that settles the matter.

There being no other government based upon the same lines as that of Russia, it is therefore difficult, without considerable elaboration, to convey an idea of the powers of the respective superior organizations and officials. It may be said, however, that the chairman of the Central Executive Committee (Kalenine) occupies approximately the same position in the Russian government as the President does in the French government. In fact, he is often called the President of Russia.

The Council of Peoples' Commissioners is equivalent to a cabinet, and the chairman of this cabinet (Lenine), may be denominated the Prime Minister of Russia. And, as in France and many other countries, so in Russia, the Prime Minister, being closely identified with and highly responsible for the policies of the government, is a bigger figure than the President of the country.

Many writers have sought to convey the impression that the Soviets are structures peculiarly Russian in character. But this is not the case. The fact is that there was very little understanding of them or propaganda made for them before they sprang up almost spontaneously during the big revolutionary upheaval of 1905. They are very different organizations from the village "mir," which has been pointed out as their progenitor. They develop naturally in a revolutionary situation, just as central labor councils do in every capitalist country, even though the men forming them have little or no knowledge of each others' experiences.

For a working-class which has been broken with capitalism, and which finds itself on the road to power, it is a perfectly logical, if not inevitable procedure to discard the old state machinery, to cast off all parasitic elements and to select its governmental representatives directly from the workshops, fields and barracks. That the workers in other countries have not got the Soviet idea stronger is due chiefly to the fact that, unlike the Russian workers, they have not yet been faced by real revolutionary crisis.

## Some Crimes of the

By Arthur Warner

(Continued from last week.)  
Prevent Haywood Meeting.

The action of the American Legion in Detroit, when "Big Bill" Haywood planned to speak there shortly after his conviction in Chicago, is a notorious instance of interference with public officers. Mayor Couzens said that Haywood had a right to speak and would be permitted to do so as long as he remained within the law. When David G. Jones, adjutant of the Charles A. Larned Post, No. 1, heard this, he replied, according to the Detroit Journal: "Regardless of what Mayor Couzens says, Haywood will not speak in Detroit. At our regular meeting Wednesday night a vigilance committee was appointed for the very purpose of preventing any speech by Haywood in Detroit. He will not speak." What happened subsequently is told in a letter dated September 14, 1920, from James W. Inches, Detroit's chief of police, to Arthur Woods, then chairman of the National Americanism Commission of the Legion.

A meeting to be addressed by W. D. Haywood in the Arena in this city, which holds five or six thousand people very easily, was very freely advertised, and the American Legion became excited over the matter and held several meetings at which Haywood was quoted as defaming the returned soldiers in bitter language, one remark being that he had referred to them as a "bunch of cooties." Several of the American Legion posts formed a definite plan to storm the Haywood meeting, not to enter into any debate, as you were informed, but to storm the meeting, and a band of music had been hired for that purpose. These cooler and more reliable officers of the Legion, including the commander of the largest post, assured me that there would be over three thousand of the boys in line who would march to the meeting on Sunday afternoon and break it up. They assured me that if the meeting was held there would be bloodshed, and I saw plainly that there would be no way to prevent a clash, so I wired Mr. Haywood at Toledo that, owing to the threatening condition of affairs caused by his remarks concerning returned soldiers, I had prohibited the meeting.

I then, supported by many of the officers of the American Legion, brought about a decision in the Legion to ignore Haywood entirely, and he came here and held his meeting several weeks later.

No 'Lese Majesty' Tolerated.

A dispatch from Lodi, California, to the San Francisco Examiner, dated January 28, last, said:

Called upon the carpet before the American Legion meeting here upon a charge of defacing a picture of President Wilson, which was displayed in the office of their realty firm, Samuel and John Lochenmaier, wealthy residents, have since been ordered to dispose of their property and leave Lodi. The notice was served by Mayor Garrison, commander of the post.

Of course the Legion has always been keen in the pursuit of anything branded as "radical" or "bolshevist." Thus the People's Church, of Louisville, Kentucky, was compelled to disband because of "economic pressure" brought by the Jefferson Post, which charged John G. Stilli, the pastor, with anarchistic teachings. The

es. Where they have approached such crises, notably in the Paris Commune, the tendency to create Soviets has been clearly manifested.

The Russian Soviets, although they have many admitted faults, provide the workers with the governmental mechanism much more flexible and responsive to their will than any democracy based on bourgeois principles. Of course the Soviets are highly unsatisfactory to the remnants of non-producing elements still hanging on here, but then, in this country, no one is disturbed over that. The interests of the workers are being taken care of, and in Russia that's all that matters.

(Continued next week.)

### BILL BONEHEAD AND THE FRUIT OF THE LAND.

