
Chicago “Prepares” to Live; Fights “Preparedness” to Die.

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Chicago has had its “preparedness” parade. The tabulators of the jingo press report 130,214 were in line. Lesser parades were held in many other cities as an adjunct to the Chicago procession.

The effect of these parades upon the people of the nation will only develop with the passing of time. The jingo press is now interesting itself in a recruiting campaign for the national guard. Judged by the results of the national recruiting campaign for the regular army carried on by the federal government, this militia enlistment effort will prove a dismal failure.

The Chicago parade, like the New York demonstration, showed that conscription had to be resorted to in order to make the affair a success. And the marchers, like the exploited State Street department store girl, pretty generally felt, “I don’t know what this is all about. But we are going to have a holiday and that makes a hit with me.”

Organized labor was not in line. The Chicago Federation of Labor had passed resolutions denouncing this effort of the militarists. True, the head of the Chicago Building Trades Council, hand in glove with the building contractors, and not in sympathy with the real spirit of organized labor in the nation’s second city, gave his support to the parade. And Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, backed up the procession. Nevertheless, organized labor was not in line.

All Labor’s Enemies.

“We are not in sympathy with the parade,” said E.N. Nockels, Secretary of the Chicago Federation, against whom the jingo press has been directing scathing editorials because of the lack of “patriotism” shown

by the body he represents. “The men at the head of it are all enemies of organized labor.”

Where labor was organized it was not compelled to bow to the conscription campaign of the masters. Thus in the big clothing manufacturing plants of Hart, Schaffner & Marx, the workers are organized. “How do you fell about marching?” was the question that came from on high to the different shop chairmen. “We’ll ask the workers,” said the shop chairmen. “We do not intend to march,” declared the workers. “They refuse to march,” the shop chairmen replied, and the echo of the voice of the masters came back “Very well,” and the report went to the parade committee of the Chicago Association of Commerce, “There will be no marchers from the ranks of the workers in the Hart, Schaffner & Marx plants.”

That story was repeated in every other industry where the workers were organized. It was true also where there is a strong spirit of organization among the unorganized.

Out in the huge plant of the Pullman Co. on the south side the conscription campaign was on in full blast. In one of the departments a prominent Socialist is recognized as a leader among his fellows. So the “boss” came to him first to enlist him for the parade. “Nothing doing,” was the response.

Hard on the Head.

The “boss” tried to argue. He suggested that perhaps the marching might be a little hard on the feet, but thought that perhaps this might be overlooked.

“The marching wouldn’t be hard on the feet,” came the quick reply, “but it would be hard on the

head," and the workers who stood about heard, agreed, and let up a cheer of approval. And recruiting for the "preparedness" parade died a natural death in that department of the Pullman shops.

Chicago, as an organized community, had very little to do with the procession. The city council passed a resolution, following the demonstration in New York City, declaring for a parade and setting the date at June 10 [1916]. The resolution was passed without discussion and with the two Socialist aldermen voting against it.

Plutes Take Charge.

From then on, however, the Chicago Association of Commerce took possession of the parade plans. The first thing it did was to change the date to Saturday, June 3, the Saturday before the opening of the Republican and the Bull Moose conventions. Insistent rumor immediately declared that the whole affair was being staged to advance the candidacy of Roosevelt for President. At the same time J. Ogden Armour, the beef trust king, and a host of other Chicago capitalists, organized the Illinois Committee for Roosevelt and the brother-in-law of J. Pierpont Morgan came on from New York City to help them out. Simultaneously the entire city was flooded with big pictures of Roosevelt. They went up in all the store windows and show places of Chicago.

So it might be said that, first of all, the parade was a "big business" demonstration, that secondly, it was a Roosevelt booster, and that only incidentally was it a "preparedness" procession.

Socialist Aldermen Active.

The night before the parade started through the city's streets, however, there occurred an event that was completely ignored by the capitalist press. Its significance will develop, nevertheless, in the years that are to come. This event was the introduction into the Chicago City Council of the first "program of social preparedness" ever presented to the city. This program appeared in the shape of three orders introduced by Alderman John C. Kennedy, the Socialist alderman from the 27th Ward, and hit at the three big problems of housing, unemployment, and municipal ownership.

"This is the beginning of the inauguration of the complete municipal program of Socialism in Chicago," said Alderman Kennedy.

The "preparedness" parade marched into the City Council when the head of the finance committee asked that all city employees who marched in the parade be paid their regular wages.

The two Socialist aldermen, William E. Rodriguez, of the 15th Ward, and Kennedy, immediately raised the question whether those who refused to march would get paid. If this was to be the case, then the Socialist aldermen declared Chicago was in a class with the other labor sweating, exploiting, capitalist institutions of the city. They fought against the conscription method used by the private employers being adopted by the city.

The City Council wavered under their protest and then declared that city employees who did not want to parade, but who would report for duty, would be paid. Since the city was on a holiday, "reporting for duty" was merely a perfunctory affair, and city employees numbering many thousands were paid whether they marched or not.

Then Alderman Rodriguez pushed through a resolution calling for the appointment of a committee of 5 to mediate in the strike of the express wagon drivers.

"Social Preparedness Program."

This paved the way for the introduction of the three "social preparedness" resolutions by Alderman Kennedy, the first of which was as follows:

HOUSING.

ORDERED, that the Council Committee on Judiciary with the assistance of the Corporation Counsel, prepare a bill or bills for introduction at the next session of the state legislature of Illinois which will confer upon our city government whatever powers are necessary to condemn, buy, sell, lease and rent land and buildings for residence purposes; the power to exercise excess condemnation where public improvements are being installed; the power to alter, remove, or demolish buildings which are declared by the department of health or department of buildings to be unfit or unsafe for human habitation; and the power to install in residence districts such improvements as are necessary to make all dwelling places safe and sanitary.

Chicago's city fathers pondered and wondered what this was all about. They could find no objections to this program of municipal preparedness, at least not for the time being, and so the order was passed. Then came the second order as follows:

UNEMPLOYMENT.

ORDERED, that the council committee on judiciary with the assistance of the corporation counsel prepare a bill or bills for introduction at the next session of the state legislature of Illinois — if such an act would be unconstitutional — which will confer upon the city of Chicago the power to establish an insurance system against unemployment similar to the so-called Ghent system which for several years has been in operation in many European cities; and any additional powers which will enable the government of Chicago to cope more successfully with the problem of unemployment.

This order, also, did not appear especially dangerous to the old party politicians in the City Council, and it was referred to the judiciary committee as requested. Then came the third order as follows:

MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP.

ORDERED, that the council committee on judiciary prepare for introduction at the next session of the state legislature of Illinois an amendment to the constitution of the state of Illinois which will enable cities to issue bonds in excess of 5 percent of the value of the taxable property of such cities when the funds derived from the sale of these bonds are to be used for the purchase of any revenue producing public utility.

This last order brought the aldermanic protectors of privately owned public utility corporations to their feet, especially the representative of the traction trust. They saw municipal ownership coming with a vengeance. But they could not prevent this order from also being sent to the judiciary committee. And since Socialist Alderman Rodriguez is a member of the judiciary committee these orders will not be permitted to die with the false patriotism aroused by the Chicago "preparedness" parade.

Chicago's "military preparedness parade" is but another milestone in the passing of the dynasty of gold. It also marks the inauguration of the city's "social preparedness program" and showed the growing strength of the rule by the masses.

"PREPARE!" IS THE WATCHWORD. BUT IT MEANS "PREPARE TO LIVE!" IT DOES NOT MEAN "PREPARE TO DIE!"

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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