Manufacturing the Proletariat.

An Astounding Bill.

By S. P. BUNTING.

Kautsky says somewhere that Socialists have always been on the side of genuine national emancipation movements, such as the Polish or Irish movements. Such instinctive sympathy with any agitation designed to shake off any chains, even if complicated with racial or sectional interests, must be felt in face of the profound resentment felt among natives all over South Africa at the Native Affairs Administration Bill, 1917 now before Parliament.

The Natives Land Act of 1913, nominally a measure of 'segregation,' was outrageous enough. This Bill repeals its whips and substitutes scorpions.

The 1913 Act established provisional 'native areas' outside which, broadly speaking, natives might not acquire any interest in land; and appointed a commission to carve up the Union more exactly into native and white areas respectively. Needless to say, the whites got very much the lion's share from the outset. The natives protested, and went to England a-quarrel; but when war broke out were prevailed upon to drop agitation until peace was restored. Not so the Union Government, however. The Commission have ransacked Africa for worthless ground and awarded it to the natives. What good ground they threw in, as e.g. in a part of Zululand, the local whites are clamouring to have excluded again. In all, the 4½ million natives get under 20 million morgen; the 1½ million whites get the rest, 122 million morgen. And now Government brings in the Bill to confirm this delimitation, and unmasks what 'segregration' really means. Native areas are to be removed outside the scope of Parliamentary or Provincial legislation. Instead the Governor General, on his own, may by proclamation make what laws he pleases for the 'peace, order and good government' of the native areas, and may repeal any existing law which would otherwise apply there: the only matters excluded from this egregious legislation by proclamation being certain Union Acts on finance, taxation, prisons, defence, police, railway and harbour service, Mines and Works, (you bet!) customs, patents, workmen's compensation, and the like. Parliament retains a kind of appellate control over such legislation, but partly under conditions easily defeasible by those who manipulate the procedure of the House.

In order the more effectually to grind the faces of the luckless natives to be swept into these areas, the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court is to be abolished in favour of special Courts 'for the administration of justice,' also constituted, of course, by the Governor General, and, inter alia, native chiefs' courts with jurisdiction as per proclamation; and no appeal will even lie to the Appellate Division.

The Governor General may or may not be guided by the advice of a permanent paid Native Affairs Commission, appointed by himself. (The Governor General means in effect of course, the Cabinet of the day)

Communal or joint ownership by more than five natives or by a native company is forbidden anywhere. A perfunctory saving of the Parliamentary vote in the Cape is inserted by reference: but God only knows how it can ever be maintained.

Outside the native areas a native [illegible] exceptions, only as the white man's servant.

The object and effect of the whole Bill is perfectly clear: to drive the natives of South Africa as helots completely than ever into the labour market. The old Victorian proclamation forbidding legislation discriminating on the ground of colour, origin, language or creed is thrice denied by this most loyal of Governments. Not a single native, it is believed, has been consulted about the Bill. Not a single native voice, it is fairly certain, will ever be effectively heard in the administration of the native areas. The natives do not realize that an appeal to the "British public," (especially with Smuts in Britain) will be more futile than ever. The "British Public's" mind has been poisoned in advance with inspired laudations of Botha as the natives' benefactor, and no doubt the British Government, as in 1913, has promised not to veto the Bill.

Nor do the native workers, and their white fellow-workers, yet more than dimly realize that this is fundamentally no race or national matter of whites versus blacks; but that the campaign for emancipation is one for all wage-earners against all capitalists and that the organized power of all workers, internationally combined, is the only deliverance from the Beast. So much so that it may be that the very object of King Capital in this Bill may have to be attained before that power can take shape. For it is not the agricultural rustics, wallowing in barbarism, ignorance, poverty and despair in the reserves, but the industrialized natives on the Rand, who will exercise it. All success in the meantime to the opposition to the Bill. The Corner House section would be well advised in the ultimate interests of capitalists if they opposed it themselves.

Russia's Awakening.

According to this week's cables while [illegible] of Russian workmen seem to have taken place in connection with [illegible] in that country.

With the rapid growth of Capitalist industry in Russia during the war, the power of Czarism is waning, as witness the Duma scenes, and the Liberal [illegible] power, and hard on their heels the proletarian movement.

M. Trepoff, the Russian Premier, speaking in the Duma on December [illegible] declared beyond doubt that the Government is not caring a [illegible] the Constantinople [illegible] as long as Russia are [illegible] by our loyal Allies ourselves, and that is [illegible] which we combat in Great Britain and France, and which has [illegible] established in a most definite [illegible] Russia to the Russian people. The [illegible] know for what they are shedding their blood, and in accord with our Allies the announcement [illegible] is made to-day from the tribune."

Reuter's correspondent in telegraphing the report of the speech adds that when M. Trepoff mounted the tribune to read the Government statement the Extreme Left organised a noisy hostile demonstration, which prevented the Premier from speaking for three-quarters of an hour. M. Trepoff three times mounted the tribune but each time he had to leave it again owing to the turmoil raised by the Extreme Left. To put an end to the demonstration the President of the Duma proposed the expulsion for eight sittings of twelve Socialist and Labour members, including the leader, M. Tchkheidze and M. Kerenski. The proposal was adopted, and M. Trepoff was then able to deliver his speech.