

The Government of India's Plot Exposed by the General Strike in Bombay.

The announcement of a new general strike in Bombay demonstrates the failure of the Government of India to crush the working class movement by their arrest of five weeks ago of 31 strike leaders on a charge of conspiring to "deprive the King of his sovereignty over India". Nor is this the only effect of the strike. For it not only signally exposes the Government frame-up, as it is called in America, against the strike leaders, but also brings to nought the real conspiracy, the conspiracy hatched against India in White Hall and in Delhi.

From the text of the indictment against the 31 labour leaders it is clear that the intention of the Government of India is to trump up a charge which is apparently to extend over some 7 or more years against the strike leaders in order to remove them from participation in the rapidly growing movement of the terribly exploited working class and peasant masses of India. For the action of the masses has already begun to make the capitalists anxious for their profits.

But the security of capital in the textile industry is not the only object of this conspiracy charge. It had a series of other objects:

Firstly, it was designed by these wholesale arrests and allegations to frighten the Legislative Assembly, this sham parliament which meets at Delhi, elected by 2% of the population of India, into passing a **Public Safety Bill** which strengthens the death dealing hand of the Government and a **Trades Disputes Bill**, whole purpose is to smash the Labour trade union movement.

Secondly, it was designed that the speeches of the prosecution in this trial should appear immediately before the **British general election** in order that under the cry of the "Empire in Danger", "Red plot in India", etc. etc., the electorate might once more be stampeded into voting for the Baldwin Government. The Zinoviev Letter forgery worked well enough in 1924. An exact repetition however would not be so successful, but in this altered form of a frame-up conspiracy charge, it will be used to the full by the Conservative Party. While the Labour Party, whose leaders Mr. Snowden and Mr. Thomas have been excelling the most fervent conservatives in their noisy protestations of loyalty to imperialism, will be stricken dumb lest they should be suspected of sympathy with Bolshevism.

Thus, while evidence is being accumulated, witnesses assembled, agent provocateurs being scattered throughout the movement and even throughout the jails; while the prisoners are being held without bail in the deadly heat of the prison at Meerut, the imperialists have by their own actions and by the evidence of their own statements in the bourgeois press, accumulated evidence of a much more effective kind against themselves as the authors of the real plot against the Indian masses, and against the British working class.

In Bombay itself the course of events is sufficiently clear. After the heroic textile mill strike of April to October last year — after the strike had ended with capitulation of the leaders and the workers remaining undefeated, the Fawcett Committee was appointed to arbitrate on the claims of the mill owners and the strikers. While the Fawcett Committee was preparing the report the spirit of the workers was so militant, so inspiring that the leaders of the unions spoke again and again of a general strike to take place in the spring to enforce the demands of the workers. Under pressure of this contingency the Fawcett Committee issued a report of a very cunning character. The matter was carefully staged so that the strike leaders were arrested 3 days before the publication of the report — apparently in the hope that the removal of all the officers of the militant unions would enable the working class to be duped by the apparently favourable demands of the report. Distinctly on the side of the workers, as the bourgeois Bombay "Chronicle" brazenly states they were first, to grant a majority of the workers' demands and secondly, to say that while the mill owners' claim for a 7½% cut in wages was justified, it should nevertheless be not pressed." Paragraph 239 of the report says: „On the whole we are of the opinion that the weight of argument

is in favour of the proposed wage-cuts being justifiable, but we think there is an over-riding consideration against the mill owners pressing the proposal any further".

What is this "over-riding consideration"? It is that the rationalisation of the industry (here taking the form of certain standardisation proposals) cannot be carried through without the co-operation of the trade union leaders. And this announcement was immediately followed by Mr. Bakhale that he and those like him (he is a notorious reformist) would do their bit to carry through rationalisation and to prevent needless strikes in the future. Here we have the explanation in a nutshell.

The strike was initiated by the militant trade union leaders, who in the course of the strike starting from a scratch, enrolled 65,000 mill workers in the Girhikamgar union. Only through the weakness of the strike leaders, Mr. Bakhale and those of his kidney, (who had lost all influence with the workers owing to their sabotage of the Sassoon mill strike in January 1928 and also through their wholehearted support of British imperialism), were introduced into the strike committee. By their presence there they so weakened the fight as to bring about the partial capitulation of October last. Now they are prepared to work hand in glove with the employers in the opportunity that was to be given, so it was thought, by the removal of the militant strike leaders.

The workers of Bombay have falsified the hopes of British capitalism. No sooner were their leaders arrested, the unions closed down by the police raid than it re-started its activities and new officers were re-elected. What is more the new office bearers are all of them actual workers. This single fact marks for the first time an enormous step forward in the development of the revolutionary proletarian movement in India. And the first act of this new leading committee of the textile union has been to call the general strike, to destroy the laboriously and cunningly constructed plans of the capitalists and to renew the fight not only for better conditions, but for the emancipation of their class and of all the toilers of India from British influence.

The Meerut Case.

By M. Ali.

British imperialism is faced with an acute crisis in India. As long as the chief factor of antagonism was the Indian bourgeoisie, the usual imperialist manoeuvres could ease the situation. But the rapid revolutionisation of the working class has brought it to grips with an antagonism which is fundamental and does not permit a solution within the framework of imperialist domination in India. In the course of one year (1928—29) the working class has taken long strides on the road of its development as an independent revolutionary force. In this period there have been unparalleled numbers of strikes characterised by their long duration and fights between the strikers and government armed forces. The economic struggle of the workers is developing into a political struggle. There have been numerous political mass demonstrations of the workers in some of which they adopted the slogans of "Long live the Soviet Republics of India", "Long live the Indian revolution", "All power to the masses", etc. In addition to that the workers have gone on purely political strikes as they have done on the arrest of the leaders in the Meerut case.

British imperialism, alarmed at the growth of the labour movement, has resolved to crush it. In addition to shooting the workers during strikes, provoking armed conflicts between the strikers and the strike breakers and then converting the conflict into religious riots, it has passed public safety bills (made into law by an ordinance of the Viceroy) and Trades Disputes Bill with the object respectively of isolating the Indian workers and making general sympathetic and political strikes illegal. The last step in this direction is the arrest of all the prominent leaders of the workers who have been taken to Meerut to be tried for the offence of "waging war against the King Emperor."

Although in all capitalist countries the justice meted out to the working class is the justice of the capitalist class in India it is still worse. The trial there is only a farce and the law is so flexible as nobody can escape its clutches whom the government wants to shut up in the four walls of the frightful Indian