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**BOLSHEVISM IN AMERICAN LABOR
UNIONS**

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BOLSHEVISM IN AMERICAN LABOR UNIONS

A Plea for Constructive Unionism

BY

JOHN A. DYCHE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JULIUS HENRY COHEN

There is no alleviation of the suffering of mankind except veracity of thought and action and the resolute facing the world as it is when the garment of make-believe with which pious hands have hidden its uglier features had been stripped off.

THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY.



NEW YORK
BONI & LIVERIGHT

1926

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES



X:960g W691N03.73
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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

Why a Publisher's Preface? Simply because the announcement of our issuance of this book, **BOLSHEVISM IN AMERICAN LABOR UNIONS**, brought forth protests, even angry denunciations from two or three of our very close radical friends. We were told that the author of this book is, himself, an employer of labor, something, of course, which we ourselves knew. We were also informed that Mr. Dyche, although a Jew himself, which he sets forth in his book, makes a startling differentiation between the Eastern European Jew and the American Jew, accusing the former of being mainly responsible for the constant disturbances in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

The most impassioned attack that has been made by our friends concerns itself with Mr. Dyche's references to the extra-labor activities of the various unions about which he writes—their colleges, building enterprises, and general amelioration programs.

Briefly, our position is, and has always been, that we, as publishers, must maintain an open forum. During the World War more of our books were interdicted by the government than those of any other publisher. But at the time we were publishing Latzko's "Men in War," John Reed's "Ten Days That Shook the World," Albert Rhys Williams' "Through the Russian Revolution," Trotzky's "The Bolsheviki and World Peace," we issued the government's own defense of its position on conscientious objectors written by Major Walter Guest Kellogg. Side by side on our list may be found books by Bertrand Russell and John D. Rockefeller, Jr.; David Karsner's Life of Eugene V. Debs and Otto H. Kahn's "Of Many Things."

We believe that only such books as are obviously dishonest in intent or content are the only ones which should not be found on a useful publisher's list.

HORACE B. LIVERIGHT.

NOTE

THE word Yiddish, instead of Jewish, is used throughout, because the traits of the needle trade worker which I am trying to depict are peculiar, as far as I know, to the Jewish immigrant workers from Eastern Europe.

In the industry in which I am now engaged, there are quite a number of American-born Jewish workers, some of whom I employ and whom I have had an opportunity to observe quite closely. The native-born worker has quite a different conception of things generally than the European and, he has in fact, little in common with the disappointed, disgruntled immigrant one finds in the dress and cloak industry.

The native Jewish worker, like the average American, is an ardent sportsman. The radical catchwords have little fascination for him. Life, as he sees it, is a game in which, of course, the best man wins. Rockefeller, Morgan, Ford are to him the financial and industrial Babe Ruth. He knows that not every one can be the winner.

The immigrant worker from the despotic countries of Eastern Europe generally is disappointed and discontented. He hates and envies the "belorouchka" (white-collared person). He hates the landlord, who, he believes, took the land away from him. He hates the government official who took his last penny away in taxes and who made him do military service. He hates the "capitalist" who, he believes, robs him of the fruit of his toil.

A closer study of the Yiddish worker the reader will find in Chapters VIII and IX.

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INTRODUCTION

IN 1910 when I became counsel for the Cloak, Suit and Skirt Manufacturers' Protective Association, organized to meet the issue of the famous strike of that year, the then Secretary-Treasurer of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, John Dyche, was a figure of a man whom I admired but who withal seemed to me to be something of an intelligent but misguided giant. As we passed out of the stage of strike belligerency, I came to see him at closer range. Three outstanding qualities, as others did, I came to see were characteristic of the man. They were: personal integrity of the highest order, personal courage of the red-blooded variety, and a self-sacrificing purpose to serve his people constructively. This trinity of virtues has always made him seem to me one of the greatest labor leaders this country has produced. He went down to defeat with high honor. Why? Let him tell his story himself.

In 1913, when I helped to shape the Protocol of Peace in the dress and waist industry, John Dyche was then the outstanding figure in the Union. It is not too much to say that at that time it was confidence in his leadership which led my clients to go into these epoch-making agreements. It was faith in John Dyche which made for faith in John Dyche's Union. That the plans should result ultimately in the disintegration of the constructive forces then working from both sides—result furthermore in the disappearance

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of the very leaders among the manufacturers who signed the Protocol, as well as the disappearance from power of himself, minimizes not in the least my confidence in the principles he stood for nor in Dyche himself.

✓ I have seen the principles under other leadership take root elsewhere and rise to great height. Naturally, one looks for explanation. Is the type of man of John Dyche destined to fail as a labor leader? Is courageous, outspoken criticism in such a leader an asset or a liability? Dyche hates politicians. You can see that in his talk, in his writing. He hates truculence. He knows only the tact of outspoken candor. But it is fair to say that if he had continued in power, some of the worst of the present evils of the industry would not now exist.

Governor Smith, in approving the State Housing Law this year (1926), compared the measure presented to him by the Republican Legislature with the one drawn by the State Housing Commission. "But Mr. Politics put his nose in the door," said the Governor, "and we cannot get the ideal we strove for." "Mr. Politics put his nose in the door," says Mr. Dyche. Does he mean politics as we know it in political life? He means "*union politics*"—the kind of politics, however, which, in the union as often in government, puts organization above ideals, aggrandizement of power over principles, helps to keep men in power because of their influence with voters, wins victories which in essence are defeats, and, finally, develops cancers that eat away the very life of the organization itself. But Dyche tells us more. It is a terrible indictment which he draws against the propagandists of the *klassenkampf*. The poor cloakmaker—John Dyche's Moïshe—exploited for the sake of a social program, elicits our sympathy. Worse still, he

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paints the picture of an industry all but ruined through the transfer of power from the employer to the union. Economic processes dammed at one point find their outlets underground. Bootlegging and law-enforcing officers—all the result of ill-conceived restraint. What a tragic picture he draws! Trenchant, biting, with the literary skill that comes from clear thinking, he etches his message in copper. Literally, it burns.

I should not want to be regarded as saying "Amen" to everything Dyche says in this manuscript. He would not, I am sure, expect me to do so. For example, his strictures on "outsiders" and his strictures on the legal profession and the part lawyers played in the industry. While, of course, I do not take as personal these references, they do not win my concurrence. Hilquit and London were on "the other side," but their sincerity of purpose I never questioned, though I differed with them a thousand times. I was always persuaded and still believe that they willed to be constructive. Like other lawyers, however—like myself—they suffered from the limitations of their retainer; they could travel no faster than their clients permitted them to go. Nor do I agree with Dyche (as most every one knows) in his strictures on the processes of arbitration as a substitute for the strike. The industry would have died but for these institutions. As for inside history of the Union, I can vouch only for Dyche as a competent and truth-telling, if hard-biting, witness. The facts he tells are the facts as he saw them. He ought to know. Others may contradict his testimony. But his testimony is his testimony. It is worth the telling and is much the most instructive of any testimony I have yet heard in the industry. Obviously, when I wrote "Law and Order in Indus-

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try" (1916) I could but guess and surmise where Dyche would speak authoritatively. Ten years have elapsed. Time to allow the molten metal to cool and to look at it dispassionately. Dyche had to get out of the industry. So did most of the constructive leaders on the employers' side whom I knew and with whom I worked. Many of the things they prophesied have come true. Still the mass of the workers are uninformed of these economic causes and results. If Dyche's "diagnosis" could be placed in the hands of every garment worker and employer, would they not know more than they do now? "Truth is mighty and will prevail." Sixteen years have elapsed since the Protocol in the cloak and suit industry was signed. It brought into existence, as Dyche points out, a powerful trades union, one of the most powerful to-day. It dominates the industry. In the sanitary field conditions have been revolutionized. But on the economic side has the International Union done what was expected of it?

John Dyche, now himself an employer of men, is still a leader of workers. In these chapters he has justified the faith in his courage, his intellect and his sense of service to the cause in which he enlisted. To paraphrase, "Though they slay me, yet will I trust in them." This message is his message to the workers. But it is more than that. It is experience for the inexperienced. It is judgment and knowledge. It is a primer of facts—a case book—for all who would try to organize industry for social progress. That elusive factor—the human element—is here revealed, revealed by an expert, a real expert. Let us hope revealed for good in the future.

JULIUS H. COHEN.

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THE preacher is disliked the world over while the agitator is not. Why? Because the preacher criticizes, calls the attention of his hearers to their own personal faults and shortcomings, whereas the agitator criticizes, calls the attention of his hearers to the faults of—others. Simple, isn't it?

When trouble comes we are all inclined to fasten its cause on others, rather than our ourselves. And the more foolish we are the stronger is our conviction that somebody else is the cause of that trouble. Yes, the more difficult it is to convince us that our own shortcomings are the cause of our misery.

It is human nature to look for some scapegoat. Since the Germans lost the war, anti-semitism became stronger than ever in that country. In Soviet Russia, the people are sure that the cause of their trouble, the extreme poverty of the masses, is the Allied Powers, the "capitalistic" governments.

The garment workers, too, like all others, have their scapegoat. The guilty ones are the manufacturers, the employers. They simply will not allow the workers to make a decent living. Were they less selfish and less dishonest, everything would be all right. Lately the union officials have been included in the list of the accused. They are now receiving a portion of the blame that in former years had been reserved exclusively for the employers.

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When you see people become enthused over the oratory of a Bryan or a Debs, you may be sure that their speeches contain very little truth, otherwise the masses would not run after them.

You know the story of the Prince, who, addressing a crowd incognito, was so surprised when the mob applauded his remarks that he asked his friend whether he had said anything wrong. What is agreeable is not always true and what is true is not always agreeable. Truisms, but they stand.

A genuine friend is apt to call attention to your shortcomings rather than to your accomplishments. Wise parents when they speak to their children generally avoid talking to them of their merits and accomplishments.

The organized Yiddish worker considers himself the most enlightened in the world. He attends endless meetings, lectures, demonstrations. There he is agitated, propagandized, educated, patted on the back. Here he finds his enemies, real or imaginary criticized, and denounced. He goes away convinced that he is the cleverest, the most progressive creature in the world, never suspecting that his so-called "progressive movement" is only the froth of his own restless, disgruntled mind; the mind of a person who for ages has been a wanderer. The person who is always looking for something. What this something is he himself does not know. Above all he is looking for something to find fault with.

✓ High sounding phrases are to the Yiddish workers what

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beer is to the German, whisky to the Irishman, and opium to the Chinaman. They feel relieved when they find an opportunity either to indulge in or listen to them. And the radicals in the Yiddish labor movement, as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore, are the extremest of the extreme—when it affects some one else's interest. Scratch this radical, touch him in the spot that affects his personal interest, and you will often find him an ultra-conservative. The day the members of the American Security League know the Yiddish workers a little better than they do, will be the night they will sleep sounder, to indulge in an Irish bull.

The leaders bluff, and the mass is restless. When the mass finds out that it has been bluffed, turmoil and restlessness result. To quiet them, the leaders promise something. That is, they bluff them. When the mass finds out that it has been bluffed, it becomes again restless. In this way the bluff causes the turmoil, and the turmoil calls forth the bluff. Each reacts upon the other. Hence the growing demoralization and the distrust of the leaders by the masses. The so-called "Right Wingers" consist mostly of bluffers and the "Left Wingers" of the element of restlessness, although there are bluffers and disturbers enough and to spare in both camps.

The "Left Wing" movement represents the organized protest of the disappointed masses whom the communist politicians use for their own purposes. Of communism itself, the mass knows little and cares less. Instead of being known as "Left Wingers" they should be called the Opposition.

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Without scientific theories the Germans make no move. From the science of the races they have evolved anti-semitism, and race hatred. From the science of socialism they have evolved the theory of "class struggle" and class hatred. Both these "sciences" lead to civil war. Why is it that the Yiddish worker who so strenuously objects to race hatred, of which they are often victims, the propaganda of class hatred should have become so widespread? This singular phenomenon I will discuss in detail later on (Chap. IX).

Movements progress only in proportion as their leaders stand above and try to lift the masses to their own level. When the leaders lower themselves and become the followers of the masses, the movement becomes morally bankrupt. The latest turmoil of the "Left Wingers" is the result of the moral bankruptcy of the Yiddish labor movement.

That radicalism should so often result in demoralization and turmoil is quite natural. The radical is constantly telling his audience of the "enormous power of the organized working class," and must naturally make large promises. He raises the expectation of the masses. When their hopes are not realized, they become disappointed, they begin to accuse their leaders and become restless.

"Labor right or wrong, I am for labor." When labor is in the wrong, nobody profits by it except those who have instigated labor to do the wrong thing. The cause of labor suffers as much from its coddlers and blind defenders as it does from its uncompromising opponents.