

**LABOR IN THE
CHANGING
WORLD, PP.1-229**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649623334

Labor in the Changing World, pp.1-229 by R. M. MacIver

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

R. M. MACIVER

**LABOR IN THE
CHANGING
WORLD, PP.1-229**

LABOR IN THE CHANGING WORLD

BY
R. M. MACIVER



NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
TORONTO
J. M. DENT & SONS

COPYRIGHT, 1919
By E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America

PREFACE

Now that the conflict of nations is ended, let us hope forever, another conflict, the abiding and paramount issue between labor and capital, takes the center of the stage. What is that issue? Whither is it driving us? What way of deliverance is possible from the grievous disturbances and monstrous evils which it reveals? These questions I have sought to discuss and if possible to answer in this little book.

I have limited myself to the central question, the place of labor in the industrial system. The real issue lies beyond the recriminations in which both sides indulge. It is of course natural that the workers should insist on the exploiting selfishness of employers in general, and that employers should charge the workers in general with slackness and irresponsibility. Each party can bring evidence to support its indictment. But what is the conclusion? That workers, in the situation of employers, would be less grasping? Or that employers would be more industrious and "loyal" if

v

360318

put in the place of working men? Of course not. And if not, although the aforementioned evidence is symptomatic, the recrimination, the *ethical* condemnation, is vain. For it is the difference in situation that evokes the difference in character. It is due to the unlike fate of like-motived human beings within the economic system. The system, with its assignment of power and lack of power, of opportunity and lack of opportunity, the system with its evocation of the tempers and attitudes akin to the necessities which it imposes—the system alone is impeached.

Every great social division divides also, at just this point, the thoughts of men. For it raises this fundamental question: Shall we impute the responsibility to human nature primarily, assuming that the system, or lack of system, within which the division falls, is on the whole consequence and not cause; or have we ground for the belief that a practicable change of system would mitigate, if not heal, the division? The conservative answers, "You must first change human nature," assuming also, as a rule, that this is not practicable, perhaps not desirable. The advocate of reform answers that a change of system can, without changing

human nature at all, reveal a change of heart. Most obviously this question is raised to-day in respect of the disastrous international divisions of the civilized world; and according as men in general are led to accept one or the other of these alternatives, the whole future of the world will turn this way or that.

And surely no less may be said of this other great cause of offense, the economic division summed up in the words "labor" and "capital." Have we any basis here for the more optimistic view that a change of system can precede and evoke a change of heart—or, more precisely, for that is all our argument requires, an effective change of mood?

Patchwork will certainly not avail, and I have therefore laid no stress on the half-hearted and sometimes deceptive devices that pass under the names of profit-sharing and "co-partnership," nor yet on those conciliation schemes which, however useful in their own place, are calculated to bolster up the existent order. On the other hand, the success of such experiments as have seriously attempted to organize production to serve the common interest of the producers encourages the hope

that a real program of industrial reconstruction is not only necessary but feasible.

But, apart from such experiments, there are certain general considerations which may here be advanced. It is in the first place necessary to regard the industrial system as an evolution without fixity or finality, and assuredly dependent at any time on the motives of its half-creators and half-slaves—for it is true of every institution that it both springs from and dominates the wills of men. When the will of a large class within the system changes—and I try to show in what follows that it has been changing rapidly—the system itself either changes or breaks. It breaks if the dominant minority-will is so obdurate as to induce a counter spirit of dominance on the opposite side. Then we have Bolshevism, the seed of which is always sown and nurtured by its bitterest foes.

On the other hand no open-minded observer, certainly no educator, can fail to be struck with the wonderful way in which men normally respond to the institutional systems within which they grow. There is a most significant contrast between the enduring, and often too rigid, framework of institution and custom on the one hand

and on the other the responsive spirit of each fresh generation before it in turn takes on the cast of time. Change the system, and beyond doubt you change also the thoughts of men. Wherever it is practicable to remold the system to express a new ideal, it is certain that you thereby perpetuate that ideal. Now a world-earthquake has shaken the social system, including also the economic order. The forces allied to the old order are already at work to restore and to confirm it. Those who believe in a new order must seize the perhaps brief time of opportunity. They must proclaim alike an ideal and a practicable way of its attainment.

The root of industrial evil is the present wage-system. The ideal towards which we must strive is some more coöperative order of production within which there at length remains, as we now understand these terms, neither "capitalism" nor "wagery," neither wanton upliftedness nor hazardous dependence, neither prodigal waste nor sheer degrading poverty. Thus roughly stated, the ideal doubtless suggests revolution. All ideals do, or else they remain forever ideals. But revolution as a result and not a means, revolution as