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MANIFESTO

OF THE

WOOLWICH

"HANDS OFF RUSSIA"

COMMITTEE



TO THE

WORKING MEN

AND WOMEN OF

WOOLWICH.

MANIFESTO.

COMRADES,

The Woolwich "Hands off Russia" Committee, which is composed of representatives of the Trade Union, Labour, and Socialist movement, the majority of whom are also Co-operators, issues this Manifesto in the hope that the whole of you will listen to its message and place yourselves solidly behind the Committee.

You wish for the truth. We are anxious that you should know it. The Press, the Pulpit, the House, the Cinema, and all the thousand and one institutions of to-day are at the service of the Capitalist Class, ready and willing to do their bidding, because they are Capitalist Institutions themselves. Therefore, fellow working men and women, we cannot expect the unbiased truth from these sources.

AIMS AND OBJECTS.

In Britain, the worker is despised; in Russia he is appreciated. There, the motto is: "He who does not work shall not eat." For centuries the working men and women of Britain have struggled against their Capitalist Oppressors in order that they may live a fuller and free life. Working men and women the world over have been carrying on the same struggle. The Russian workers have succeeded in overthrowing their oppressors; and for the first time in the world's history, the working class has control of the economic and political machine.

This is the signal for the International Capitalist Class to wage war, open and hidden, on the Working-class Republic. They have tried to starve the Russian men, women, and children into surrender, by putting a ring of steel round Russia, and blockading all her Ports.

They have failed. The supreme efforts of the Russian Workers have staved off every dastardly blow at the Workers' Republic.

We feel it our duty to associate ourselves with the Working Class in other countries working on similar lines to bring about the end of the war with Russia, and by so doing stop the appalling loss of life caused by the use of armed force and a cruel blockade, which condemns to death thousands of your brothers and sisters, children and aged, by slow starvation. We feel that their cause is ours also, for it is the common cause of all workers of all lands, namely, that of the slave against his master. To secure our object, therefore, we are prepared to use every means in our power, including any Industrial Action that may be necessary, if a few interested shareholders, politicians, military adventurers, and gamblers in workers' lives turn a deaf and callous ear to our demands.

Our aims and objects, then, are freedom for the world's workers.

OUR REASONS FOR "HANDS OFF RUSSIA."

We have professed that we were fighting for the self-determination of nations; yet Russia is refused this right! We have professed that we were fighting to free people from the tyrannical yoke of Prussianism; yet the first people to free themselves—and that from the bloody yoke of Tzardom—are to be crushed! We fought for liberty; yet we have none—though it is said that we won it! You, working people, who have given your husbands

and sons; you, who have sacrificed your greatest love, believed and meant all these things. Did the Capitalist Governments? If not, you were deceived, and your sacrifices were in vain. The people in Russia have realised this, and have taken matters into their own hands.

It is our duty to see that our Governments fulfil their obligations and stand by the principles they have professed to uphold. This is a reason for "Hands off Russia."

Further, the workers are in control in Russia. They have dethroned their Tzar, and the ruling power is now in the hands of Labour. They have established a constitution which many students consider to be far more democratic than our own.

Without expressing any definite opinion on this point, we demand "Hands off Russia" in order that the Russian people may be able to develop their work. We have nothing to fear. If the Soviet Constitution is bad, it will automatically collapse; on the other hand, if it is good, it will become more and more secure, and we ourselves may find it necessary to adopt it.

If improvement is good, surely it is good to improve a constitution. There can be no more harm in improving the constitution of a country than in improving the railway system. If a constitution becomes obsolete there can be no more harm in scrapping it than in scrapping an obsolete warship. An obsolete fleet would put us behind in warfare; an obsolete constitution would put us behind in social development. Russia is experimenting with the constitution of the country; and other countries (Liberty-loving, mark you!) have no right to interfere.

We therefore want to learn from Russia whether her change is for better or worse. We cannot say whether the child will be good or evil if we strangle it at birth. Russia must be allowed to develop. It will be to our benefit. These are our main reasons for "Hands off Russia."

THE CAPITALISTS' REASONS FOR HANDS ON RUSSIA.

These are not very difficult to see. The mineral and agricultural wealth of Russia are very great. With a friendly Capitalist Government in Russia, agreements could be made (without the people's knowledge) to exploit untold fields of wealth. Russia has vast deposits of Coal, Iron, Manganese, Tin, Copper, Zinc, Lead, Gold, etc., 500,000,000 acres of exceedingly rich soil, large quantities of oil, and immense supplies of timber. With Russia's millions of people as wage slaves applied to tap these sources of wealth, untold riches would be poured into the pockets of an idle class in this and other countries. These are the direct economic attractions to a small group of profit-hunters who say they are out to save democracy from the tyranny of the Bolsheviks!

The direct political reasons (though these can ultimately be reduced to economic) are that **THE WORKERS ARE IN CONTROL**. This is more than our "Democrats" can stand, and probably this alone would be sufficient to keep them at war with Russia. They would rather anybody be in control than the workers. The capitalist reasons for intervention are obvious. Churchill has said Labour is not fit to rule. The Russian workers have proved that they are—and Churchill does not like it. Churchill! The Champion of vested interests! Who is Churchill that he should condemn to death and misery thousands of innocent people?

OUR APPEAL.

Humanity is passing through a great creative process, a process pregnant with sufferings of the greatest magnitude. We are witnessing a grandiose spectacle—the forces created by the old world order are now destroying the very order which brought them into being. With giant strides the moment is approaching when the working class the world over, having seized political power, will lead humanity to further progress.

We appeal to the working people of Woolwich to be prepared for any crisis that may arise. The way to prepare is to organise for it. The best basis of organisation is the workshop, irrespective of craft or skill.

What if your Trade Unions fail you? They have failed you in the past. It must not be again. They have failed to carry out the decision of conferences on the question of Russia.

We ask, therefore, all Workshops to AFFILIATE NOW to this Committee (men and women in all branches of industry, shop assistants, teachers, etc., are eligible), and await your response.

- Councillor A. H. GILDER (Chairman), I.L.P.,
61A, Station Road, Plumstead.
- W. J. STEED (Secretary), I.L.P.,
279, High Street, Plumstead.
- A. LEAKE (Financial Sec.), Woolwich Radical Club.
- Councillor A. HOWARTH, Plumstead Radical Club.
- W. COCKS, Independent Labour Party.
- H. STRAKER, Socialist Labour Party.
- E. WILLIMENT, No-Conscription Fellowship.
- PELL, Royal Arsenal Shop Stewards.
- A. HORNETT, N.U. Vehicle Workers.
- J. SHEPPARD, Woolwich Trades Council.
- C. PENDREY, A.S.E., No. 2.
- A. SMYTH, L.P.L., No. 14.
- E. TAYLOR, A.S.E., No. 4.
- G. WHITTAKER, Boilermakers.
- T. BRAVERY, N.U.R.
- F. HILL, A.S.E., No. 10.
- S. GOY, Building Workers' Industrial Union.
- A. HOWES, Scientific Instrument Makers
(Plumstead Branch).
- D. BALDIE, A.S.E., No. 7.
- A. WALLER, Woolwich Labour Party.
- J. STACEY, Workers' Union (Dockyard Branch).
- MEAD, L.P.L., No. 15.