

SPECIAL NEWS

FROM FRANCE

FRENCH GOVERNMENT WHIPPED.

The Working Class in Real Action—A Few Lessons in Sabotage—Durand's Sentence Commuted to Seven Years—Must Be Freed.

Another victory for the C. G. T. This time it is in the case of Durand, the secretary of the Coal Heavers' Union of Havre, who was sentenced to death for alleged moral complicity in the killing of the scab Donge several weeks ago. The circumstances of this case were particularly raw. Donge was killed by a half dozen strikers in a drunken row. The authorities and business elements of Havre, sore over the recent coal heavers' strike and also sharing in common with the capitalist class all over France the red wave of hatred and fear of the C. G. T., bred by the recent railroad strike, decided to make an example of some of the bold Syndicalist anarchists. A plot was cooked up and Durand and several others were arrested. A bunch of scabs testified that at a business meeting held six weeks previous, Durand had put to a vote the killing of Donge. Only one man voted no—he was deaf. The trial was held in the neighboring town of Rouen, and Durand not being a millionaire only brought a few of some 200 witnesses that were willing to testify in his behalf. In spite of the utter absurdity of the contention that Donge's death had been voted in a business meeting at which 600 men had attended and of which not a word came to the authorities, and also the refutation of this testimony by Durand's witnesses, the jury brought in a verdict of guilty for Durand without extenuating circumstances. His companions were given long sentences in the penitentiary and he was sentenced to death.

Immediately the verdict was known all the great papers of Paris put up a great holler that at last the tactics were found that would put an end to the militants of the C. G. T. But alas, they reckoned without their host. The C. G. T. immediately got busy and hundreds of protest meetings were held all over France; yes, all over Europe. It was the beginning of another Ferrer affair. The capitalists got cold feet. They had not reckoned that the quiet slaughtering of a coal heaver would cause such a fuss. The attitude of the press changed, henceforth the premeditated legal slaughter of Durand was characterized as a mistake.

It savagely attacked the C. G. T. for attempting to make another Dreyfus affair of this simple judicial error. Investigations were started and a petition for Durand's pardon circulated by Paul Murnier, deputy (not socialist), and signed by one-third of the chamber of deputies, was placed on President Fallieres' desk. The Union of the Syndicats of the Seine (local C. G. T. organization) put a paper weight on this petition in the shape of a threat to give Paris the biggest working class demonstration it has seen for a day—to send 200,000 working men to the president's palace on New Year's day (day of the visits of ambassadors to the president) to bid him "Happy New Year." Though Fallieres had some 50,000 troops in Paris, this little visit didn't appeal to him and on December 31, in the evening, he commuted Durand's penalty to seven years in the penitentiary: a cowardly attempt to kill the rising sentiment in favor of Durand, to make people believe that the government had been lenient. For doing this he was "hawled out" from all directions. The capitalist papers called him a coward for yielding in the face of the C. G. T. demonstrations, "When the anarchists had their revolvers at his throat." The rebels poured the hot shot into him also and are now demanding complete liberty for Durand. They are going to make this demand palatable to the government by backing it up with the general strike, if necessary. The C. G. T. of Italy has also promised to sit in at the game and take a whack at their masters at the same time, just to show their spirit of class solidarity. With the Durand affair thus assuming most important proportions and the C. G. T. and the capitalists alike preparing for the great lockout in the building trades in Paris next spring, there is very likely to be something doing in French labor circles.

The "Pearled Strike."

And the famous "pearled strike:" The wise Briand a week or so ago decided from

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the goodness of his heart to put back a few of the 3000 discharged railroaders. The idea was to rehire a few of the men at a time and thus hoodwink the workers into believing that the government was going to hire them all again and to get them to stop the pressure of the sabotage. This plan has proved a miserable failure.

The rebels are "onto" Briand, and although little bunches of men are being put back to work daily, the sabotage goes on in an ever-increased volume. The railroaders will be satisfied with nothing short of the complete reinstatement of all their discharged fellow workers.

The companies have already suffered millions of dollars' worth of damages and would doubtless give in were they not afraid of the terrible precedent it would make. Conditions on the roads are indescribable, the blockade is so complete that in several big ports the authorities have refused to accept any more freight. There are mountains of perishable goods piled up everywhere and the consignees are unable to get their shipments. Factories and mines are closing down, as they can either get no raw material or can't find room to store their finished product. And the railroads, though working double crews, are unable to in the least clear the tangle, which grows worse from day to day.

The companies have put many detectives to work as freight handlers in an attempt to catch the saboters, but in vain. They are uncatchable. "La Guerre Sociale" contains a warning to the saboters to look out for these "mouchards" who can easily be evaded by each "bon bongre" doing his own little piece of sabotage by himself.

An amusing and instructive illustration of the extent of the sabotage, and the class consciousness of the saboter, Merle Almercyda, one of the editors of "La Guerre Sociale," is in La Sante prison as a result of the railroad strike. A couple of days ago he received a package from a neighboring town. An ordinary package would have spent anywhere from a week to two months on the road but this one was rushed through in double quick time. Its early arrival is explained by the following legend written by some unknown railroad: "Saboters are asked to please consider the name of the consignee." "La Guerre Sociale" threatens to prosecute all merchants who use this method of getting their shipments piloted through the strange and devious channels of the grand pearled strike tangle.

Yours for the I. W. W.

W. Z. FOSTER.