

# COLLAPSE NOW THREATENED

## Kingsley Says First Gun Fired in War Was Capitalism's Death Knell

Under the caption of "The End of an Epoch," Comrade E. T. Kingsley once more rung his warning knell on Sunday night at the Royal, the key-note being sounded in advance by Mrs. G. H. Taylor as chairman. She assured her hearers that, if they were depending upon the other fellow, they were nearing the end of their existence. With a continuance of the rise of prices and the curtailment of production, the majority of people would soon be starved off the face of the earth; so they might as well make preparations for laying out their lives themselves. The mishandling of Great Britain's food supply showed the hopelessness of the case, even under government control.

There was no prospect, she said, of things getting better as long as the farmer worked long hours, got one-fourth the retail price of his commodities, and knew he was being robbed hand over fist. He would just raise enough for his family, and tell the rest of the world just where they could go. He had been, like the working class in general, too good and kind. He was now getting tired of this. She didn't blame the farmer one bit.

Comrade Kingsley averred: "We shan't have to wait very long for the crisis—it's here right now. The whole civilized world is being confronted with confusion worse confounded."

Never was the mind of man so confused as it was now; never the situation of the world so helpless. Ruling-class civilization had reached the apex of its achievement in the bloody war; the first gun fired in that war sounded the death-knell and the doom of ruling-class society.

For the last 10,000 years, at least, all the institutions of human society had rested on human slavery. The slaves were now more cruelly tortured than ever before; and a general collapse was threatening to bury those slaves with their masters in oblivion. The speaker believed nothing else conceivable, except that this civilization should go to complete ruin.

History was not a record of human progress, but of the development of human slavery. Machinery had never lightened the burden of human toil; it had only forced on an ever-lessening number of slaves the burden of producing the necessary things of life for all, and turned over an ever greater proportion to the service of the ruling class. By a physical law, it was impossible to produce power without the expenditure of an equal amount of energy; to suit a human purpose, it required human energy, and no other power could take its place. The weight apparently lifted by one man at the lever, was really lifted by the combined energies of a multitude of men. The entrance of mechanical appliances into industry did not conserve human energy; on the contrary, it added friction, which ultimately became impossible

for those living under it to feed and clothe themselves.

Referring to the British government's consignment of thousands of carcasses of mutton to the soap-works, etc., Comrade Kingsley pointed out that the mutton was produced to be sold—not to be eaten. "It's the owner's business to do what he pleases with that stuff. It didn't cost him anything, and he won't get anything for it, except a promise to pay. There is never anything to pay with; what is brought forth from day to day is likewise consumed from day to day. All the nations are now bankrupt; they've got more money than they ever had before—and it isn't worth a damn!" (Laughter.) Profit, the equivalent of what Marx called surplus value, was merely figures on the books, or "figurative" wealth. "That surplus value is surplus figures; that's all. The real values are all consumed. There is so much money that it isn't worth anything. It never was worth anything in the first place; if we understood it; and it's worth even less now, whether we understand it or not."

Whatever might be the purchasing power of money the workers stood practically upon the same basis. "It will take you all your foot time working for wages to keep your family from starving to death. You've got to surrender your life for your grub; and you may not have a chance to do that much longer. Each day, the ruling class is finding it more difficult to employ you."

Every country was hollering for new channels of trade—"trafficking in the proceeds of your lives." Trade never went to any country for the food of the people of that country. "The Hudson Bay Company never brought out anything except for the purpose of trimming the Indians and the gang that's here now. What these have got to hold a pageant for I fail to see. They'd better hold a funeral—over themselves."

After touching again on the official figures from Washington, showing that in 1918 only one family in five was engaged in essential production, the others being employed on railways, munitions, etc., the speaker observed: "That the fix we're in as the result of 10,000 years of slavery. Its history can be traced by a trail of blood, whether in periods of war or periods of peace. The war of the last four years was purely a machine war. It was never fought for any less ignoble purpose than that of butchering slaves wholesale and at the least possible cost. That same machine will wipe us off the face of the earth if it is allowed to go its course. I believe it will go its course, and this civilization will be wiped out."

If, however (and this was a great big "If"), the farmers and workers understood the problem, they would see that, by reversing the process—removing the people back on to the land by the same slow process as they had been gradually converted in industrial centres the problem might be solved without millions of people being destroyed by starvation in the cities. "It is because people don't understand this that there appears to be no hope," the speaker added. He ridiculed the folly of strikes, which didn't solve any problem, and declared: "While cut-throats and bludgeon-wielders are recruited out of your class, you've only got what is coming to you. You've the property of the ruling class; and that ruling class has the right, because it has the power, to do as it likes with its property." To the returned soldiers he added: "You've only got what your masters had a perfect right to give you. If we were men, we'd take our medicine without squealing; but slaves can't be men."

This system, he said, grew up in about two centuries. It would go down much quicker than that.