

OUR INDUSTRIAL PROBLEMS.

(By "Hesper.")

What are the problems of industry in Australia?

A moment's thought raises a bewildering series. Whatever form industry takes—be it ship-owning, transport, pasturage, sheep raising, manufacturing, gold mining—each has its own special set of problems, and its set of inter-related problems that are not confined to Australia alone. The industrial problems of Australia are the industrial problems of the world, and an independent solution is impossible. So complex, so internationally involved is the whole question of commerce and industry that any suggested solution that deals with one industry only or one country only is foredoomed to failure. The question, then, is seen to be enormous in its scope—so enormous as almost to defy solution.

The one possibility is to get down absolutely to bedrock, if there be such a thing; to see if there be one great fundamental difficulty underlying all the minor difficulties and tackle that. Something is wrong with the very foundations of the whole House Industry. But foundations are difficult to see and the task of repair dangerous. It is easier to keep on patching the wobbling super-structure. Easier, but futile. Let us try to examine the foundations.

No thoughtful person will deny that the whole industrial fabric is in a

Most Parlous Position

to-day. Its problems are crying out for solution and are being brought home in no uncertain fashion to men's business and bosoms. The great strike weapon never rusts in disuse. On both sides there is a sense of injustice; and justifiably.

Employees are everywhere demanding more and more, and giving less and less of honest service; business losses are enormous. So says Capital.

The wealth of the world is coming more and more under the control of individuals. So says Labour.

On both sides there is suspicion, mistrust, hatred, the desire for revenge. Capital and Labour are two armed camps, perilously ready for active war. The ground of suspicion is a fertile one for the seeds of the anarchist, the social vandal.

England—sober, steady old England—was perilously near revolution and perhaps a total collapse of the whole social system in the great strike of 1927. Australia has been on the very verge of it more than once—nearer than the average man believes.

These recurrent shipping strikes have more serious possibilities than mere butter and sugar shortages. The whole situation in industry to-day is indeed fraught with peril. France and Russia have witnessed revolutions and suffered the agonies of reorganisation on new lines. It is not impossible that other countries, including Australia may have to undergo the same terrible experience. That she should be the aim and object of the propaganda of many men in Australia to-day; that she should be saved from it, is the object of all who see its futility and are seeking another solution. Whatever the solution found, it will not be an easy one. But failure to find one will be followed inevitably by consequences horrible to contemplate.

Armed Camps.

Let us study our industrial problem with the seriousness it demands.

The two armed camps are there, then, at best in a state of truce. Both are bitter with the memories of ancient and of recent wrongs. Both are suspicious, both hostile, yet each needs the other's services, and must have them to exist. Thus, the fundamental problem of industry in Australia is not, I take it, the supply of

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