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SAYS RUSSIA PAYING PRICE

W. W. LEFEAUX SAYS THE WORKERS STILL
LIVE ON BLACK BREAD AND CABBAGE SOUP.

"The people of Russia are paying a terrible price for their ideals and their machine. There are few now who in 1917 knew what the transition from feudalism to socialism would really mean," said W. W. Lefeaux of Vancouver when addressing a public meeting under the auspices of the C. C. F. in the Chamber of Commerce auditorium yesterday evening. But the people there have faith Mr. Lefeaux said. They believe that life is going to be worth while living shortly--not in the next world but in this.

Mr Lefeaux said he had returned from his world tour with three obsessions. One of them was that democracy was in danger, unless it was an intelligent democracy.

"I am obsessed with the idea that dictatorship is inevitable unless we busy ourselves and learn to be intelligent," he said.

In England he said, the worst part of the economic depression seemed to be past. He found armament plants and shipbuilding busy.

Germany Peaceful

He found a strange kind of peacefulness in Germany. No great degree of poverty could be seen in the streets, and generally speaking the people did not seem to be dissatisfied, but that was not surprising he said when it was considered what the German people had gone through since the war.

Mr. Lefeaux said he flew from Berlin to Moscow. The planes he found not quite as fine as the American machines.

"You are minutely examined on entering Russia", Mr. Lefeaux said. "There is an extraordinary embargo on all kinds of literature." They go through you pretty closely--almost as closely as do the Japanese when you enter Manchukuo from Russia."

Mr. Lefeaux compared conditions in Russia in 1936 with conditions as he found them when he was there in 1920. Then, he recalled there were breadlines for blocks. The ruble was no good. The workers were on rations--three slices of black bread, some millet seed and an occasional herring. Thousands were dying from starvation.

"I saw myself, in 1920, some of the most distressing scenes I have ever seen in my life. People were being marched along between the bayonets of the Red Army," he said.

Atrocity Stories

There was complete absence of medicines. Many atrocity stories came out of Russia then--most of them lies, but some of them true. There was a very marked contempt for the white collar class. Conditions were desperate. The financial system had absolutely collapsed. There was no linen in the hotels or hospitals.

"But I found today the peasants were getting the rough end of it. in Russia. I found the unskilled workers still live on black bread and cabbage soup. I saw the price they are paying to establish Socialism," the speaker said.

Mr. Lefeaux, figuring the ruble five to the dollar, said state employees received about 175 rubles a month; stenographers, 200 rubles a month; unskilled workers, 105 rubles a month. Rent was worth 10 per cent of wages. Butter sold for the equivalent of 1.30 a pound. Eggs cost 14¢ each. People wore rubber and canvas shoes. Clothing was not to be had at all--he had been offered 1,000 rubles for the suit he was wearing.

Workers in Russia had no say in the way business was done, Mr. Lefeaux said. They could take their complaint to the commissariat. Closed shops were abolished at the beginning of this year. If there was a shortage of any commodity, an extra sales tax was put on it.

Great Army

Bank savings were being encouraged, he found this year, and were paid 8 per cent. A great army was being built up, complete with airplanes and tanks. The trans-Siberian railway was being double-tracked.

"I found a lot more had been said about the Russian underground than should have been said," Mr. Lefeaux said. "True, a couple of the stations are very ornate, but why they should put marble columns in their underground stations when they haven't any shoes I don't know."

He said the great new Moscow Hotel was one of the finest he had ever seen.

Mr. Lefeaux found the press of Russia, Germany and Japan pretty well muzzled. No paper that contained an account of any luxury could be circulated in Russia. In Germany the papers played up the enormous military machine being built by Russia. Japan was, fearful of the spread of communism.

In Manchukuo

Going through Manchukuo on a train, Mr. Lefeaux said the Japanese guards every now and then pulled down the window shades so the passengers could not see what was going on. He said Japan was building a great industrial state in Manchukuo.

"But I don't think we have any reason to fear a Japanese culture in British Columbia," Mr. Lefeaux said. "I have never seen cleaner people than dwell in the slums of Japan or in the poor country districts, Japanese working class culture is not very terrifying when their cleanliness, joy of living and happy children are considered."

Joseph Round occupied the chair at the meeting and introduced Mr. Lefeaux. Nigel Morgan spoke briefly on the C. C. F. aims and plans.