

Trial of Strike Leader in Winnipeg is Held up by Technical Legal Disputes

**Long Argument Over Introduction of Document, the Socialist Bulletin, Which Was Distributed at Meeting—
R. B. Russell, the Accused, Was One of the Speakers
at This Meeting.**

Winnipeg, Nov. 29.—Technical legal disputes featured the session of the trial for seditious conspiracy, of R. B. Russell today. Isaac Pitblado, K.C., for the crown, and Robert Cassidy, K.C., locked horns early in the session over the introduction of a document, the Socialist Bulletin, which was distributed at a meeting in the Majestic theatre in January. The meeting was held under the auspices of the Socialist party of Canada. Among the speakers were R. B. Russell. In the midst of the argument the grand jury came in and made their final report. After passing in a complimentary manner on the provincial institutions, they made the following recommendations:—

That a portfolio of labor be created in the provincial government; that the penitentiary law be amended so that the grand jury be included in those parties allowed to visit the prison; that the law be changed so that sentence of death should not be passed on a minor convicted of murder, and that females be included on the jury when females are on trial. Mr. Justice Metcalfe complimented the grand jury on their report.

Ben Batsford, returned soldier, was the first witness. He gave evidence as to the meeting held January 19th, in the Majestic theatre. The speakers, he said, were George Armstrong, R. B. Russell, R. H. Johns and Sam Blumenberg. In answer to a question witness said he had been attracted to the meeting by men and boys selling the Red Flag, a Socialist publication on the street, in front of the theatre, and by the fact that those in and about the meeting wore red neckties. He was, he said, handed a copy of the Socialist Bulletin as he entered. He estimated that 600 persons were in attendance. The chairman, he said, had intimated at the beginning of the meeting that the Walker theatre management had refused use of the theatre for the meeting.

Under Socialist Auspices.

The chairman of the meeting, testified the witness, informed those present that it was under the auspices of the Socialist party of Canada and witness gave from memory a resume of the speech made by George Armstrong. This speaker had dealt with the financial condition of the country, to show that the amassed wealth of Canada had doubled during the war. He contended, declared the witness, that the wealthy people had not made any sacrifice to win the war, but had profited by it. The speaker laid stress on the fact that the wealthy had profiteered and condemned a system that permitted such a state of affairs. He told the meeting that a change was coming and that it was high time there was a change. The witness said that he estimated the audience as being 75 per cent. foreigners.

Russell's Speech.

R. B. Russell, said witness, then took the platform, his subject being censorship on news from Russia. He said things were not so bad in Russia as the public thought, testified the witness. Not only was news censored, but Russell accused them (the government and the capitalists) of framing and concocting reports to get the government of Russia in wrong with the world. The speaker stated that he had access to more reliable information and he characterized the Soviet government as a good one. The only district where there was trouble was where the Allies were operating. Witness declared that the speaker had generally tried to convince his audience that the Russian Soviet government was a better government than ours—more representative; and that it would spread all over the world, and was particularly, pointing

to Canada. The press and pulpit, Russell said, according to witness, were under direct influence of the government and our country was controlled by the capitalists. The witness continued his evidence by saying the speaker said that what labor wanted could not be brought about without an effort, and that labor must organize immediately for this effort. Labor, the speaker had declared, said the witness, had never secured anything by legislation. In answer to a question, Mr. Batsford said all speakers had spoke of the coming change; referring to Russell, he said the speaker had declared that the workers were about to go out and assert themselves.

Johns' Remarks

R. J. Johns, said witness, was the next speaker, and had declared that owing to the change predicted by Russell the revolution need not be a bloody one, but could be accomplished by educating the working people who by solidarity would gain control from the capitalist class. The Socialist literature, Johns had declared, must be read by the people as a means to this education. The witness quot-

ed Johns as saying he "was ready to die for the cause" himself.

Isaac Pitblado, K.C.—Did he refer particularly to the revolution?

Witness—Yes. He said it was inevitable, and the workers were about to assert themselves. Mr. Batsford then referred to the speech made by Sam Blumenberg, who had stated that he disagreed with Mr. Johns when he said there need be no fight; that one was inevitable.

Asked as to the tenor of Blumenberg's remarks, witness said he was wild and rabid in his statements, and talked continually of revolution and bloodshed.

Many Foreigners Present

In answer to a question as to the general character of the audience and the manner in which they received the remarks of the various speakers, Batsford said that 75 per cent. of those in attendance were foreigners, who wildly applauded the remarks.

At the close of the meeting, said witness, a meeting for the following Sunday in Market square was announced to commemorate the death of Rosa Luxemburg and Paul Liebnicht, Ger. Spartacist leaders. Announcement was also made of the Socialistic program.