

Russell Admits He Approves Of Russian Soviet System of Gov't in Cross-Examination

**Accused in Seditious Conspiracy Case Shows Confidence During
Period on Stand and Seldom at a Loss for Reply—Bombarded
with Questions by A. J. Andrews, K.C., as to Operations of the
Socialistic Party in Canada, Russell Asserts They Were of En-
tirely Innocent Nature**

WINNIPEG, Dec. 18.—"Under certain circumstances a general strike is a crime."

This was a statement by Mr. Justice Metcalfe today at the trial of R. B. Russell, who is charged with seditious conspiracy. It was made in reply to a protest by Robert Cassidy, K.C., counsel for the accused, and His Lordship intimated that he was going to charge the jury to this effect. In his opinion, His Lordship explained, the constant reference to the striker as a superman made the statement he had decided to make to the jury necessary.

Under cross-examination, Russell admitted that he approved of the Russian soviet system of government, and advocated it as the best form of representative government. All workers were slaves, in his opinion, and all who did not realize their class position in society were idiots.

The cross-examination was conducted by A. J. Andrews, senior counsel for the crown. It was of a most searching character, and started at shortly after 10 in the morning, was kept up till 9:20 in the evening. J. E. Bird, K.C., took advantage of the opportunity for re-examining the accused, but by 10 o'clock he had concluded, and Russell was allowed to leave the witness stand for the dock.

Examination Finished

Tomorrow F. J. Dixon, M.P.P. will be called, and after him will appear Hon. Edward Brown, provincial treasurer, and Premier Norris, it was learned from one of the defence lawyers.

Mr. Andrews fairly bombarded Russell with questions as to the operations of the socialist party in Canada, with which the accused had identified himself, with a view to showing direct connection between that party and the alleged seditious conspiracy to overturn the government of the dominion. Russell took up the attitude that they were of an entirely innocent nature. They were directed at merely educating the workers in order that they might act intelligent-

ly when a change came. Pressed to disclose what the change was that was expected, the accused said this was simply a change in the system of the distribution of wealth. He denied advocating the abolition of all property rights, and when it was suggested that this was what the socialist party advocated, replied that the socialist party advocated socialist ownership.

Point Blank Denial

Replying to the barrage of questions as to his responsibility for the general strike, Russell denied that he personally had brought it about. It was collective work of the trades and labor council and had been authorized by the workers. He made a point blank denial of the suggestion that the strike committee had usurped the powers of government saying it had conferred at all times with the civil, provincial and dominion authorities. The establishment of a soviet form of government or any other kind of government had never been entertained by himself or any other member of the strike committee he maintained.

The publication of the Labor News of the diagram which Lenin had used in setting up the soviet form of government in Russia, Russell sought to explain away by asserting that it was just one of a series of diagrams which had been arranged to publish in order to show the workers the various forms of industrial government.

Showed Confidence

Russell's demeanor was that of great confidence. He was seldom or never at a loss for a reply. Now and again he flared up, and on one occasion told Mr. Andrews that he did not want counsel to answer questions for him, as he referred to do that himself. Although things were serious and tense for the most part, the proceedings had their humorous side at times. There were clashes between counsel that made for some merriment. Russell himself caused a laugh by declaring "I am beginning to learn much about legal rights since I came here."