

# Marx's Method

**I**N the minds of those slaves who recognize their slavery and have some idea of how to break its shackles, the name of Karl Marx calls forth such ideas of authority and correctness as does none other. This is because his analysis of capitalism, his conclusions as to its development and outcome fit in with the stern irrefragable facts of their lives. They see it work. These manipulators of objective spades and spanners have arrived at a test for truth, what the foolosophers and conscientious word-jugglers have diligently striven for but never attained through centuries of attempts to crawl into their own heads. They ask an outrageously practical question: "Will it work?" And Marx's analysis does work; so the working stiffs like it.

But what enabled Karl Marx to develop a system of political and economic thought that really works? Some thoroughly good scientific Socialists have succeeded so far in their effort to make Socialism perfect Greek to the stiff as to say that the root of the Socialist philosophy is the "Hegelian dialectic." This is a false notion that has sprung from Engel's conscientious payment of the "unendurable debt of honor" to the Hegelian school. What's more, it no more explains the roots of the Socialist philosophy—even to a high-brow—than does the supposition of a Creator explain creation. It simply imposes the Moses-ship of modern thinking on the shoulders of poor Hegel a monstrosity of which he is quite innocent.

Scientific Socialism is the outcome of a certain set of conditions. Its political nature proceeds from the class struggle; its scientific nature from the growth of modern science. We are looking at the scientific side. The scientists used to crawl into their heads, too, to find out the qualities of matter, just as the modern sky-pilots do to find out the qualities of men. And when they looked into their heads instead of out of them, they came to some very astonishing conclusions, as might be expected. We'll take some historically interesting examples. The old chemists or alchemists who tried to learn things by examining their own consciousness more than they did the things, decided that everything in the world was made up of four elements, fire, air, earth and water. They called the fire element phlogiston, and discussed it very learnedly as became their position. When a thing burned the phlogiston flew out; this accounted for the flame and the increase in weight. But some things such as zinc get heavier when they are burned; so the "scientists" had to say that in some things the phlogiston weighed less than nothing, and consequently its separation increased the weight of the thing burnt. Altogether they were fairly well muddled over the matter. But along came a sort of rebel chemist, Priestly (some loyal Britishers with hearts of oak and heads to match burnt his house and library because he thought the Frenchies did well in giving Louis XVI a sure cure for dandruff). He did something very nasty and radical—he started to do less thinking about things and more looking at them. The result was that in 1774 he discovered a new gas, oxygen, and that when things burn they unite with this gas from the air, the combination usually disappearing as a gas, making the weight of the ash less, but sometimes staying right on the spot making the weight more. Phlogiston, the fire-spirit, hung his tail between his legs and crept back, back into the heads of the metaphysical scientists so far as to never come out again. Chemists in general started to do less thinking about things and more looking at them; the result is the modern science of chemistry, a science whose conclusions work. The foundation of every other science is similar. The branch of biology that deals with cells was put on a solid working basis by Virchow in 1858, when he smashed the old speculative notion that cells develop out of a formative mother liquid, and showed that each cell develops out of another cell; he did this by watching things. Wallace and Darwin gave the old philosophic idea of evolution a scientific working basis not by mere specula-

tion, but by systematizing facts. Seyell put physical geography on its feet when he showed that the earth's formations are not altogether the results of monstrous accidents, but of the everyday forces we see around us; he did this by observing things.

One could give examples of every established science. But the purpose is only to indicate the basis of scientific method. Scientists do not juggle with words; they observe and classify facts; the results simply have to fit in with the facts. What man has discovered has been by dint of observation, not by any God-given peculiarity of speculation. This method of thinking is called by the lovers of long words the pragmatic or empirical method. It might quite as pragmatically and empirically be called common horse sense.

It is Marx's method. When Marx developed a science of economic and political thought, he did not go into his own consciousness to discover the internal verities of humanity. He followed the method of every other science; he observed and classified facts. And insofar as his observation was wide and his classification careful enough, his conclusions necessarily fitted in with the facts and worked. In his work he has painstakingly avoided word-juggling and zealously striven to build all on uncertain facts. His theory of surplus value is founded on the unmistakable phenomena of the labor process. He was a close student of blue books and all manner of statistical analyses. In political theory the one important addition that he made to the Communist Manifesto of 1848 is an observation that he made of a new fact—the Paris Commune of 1871.

As a thinker he set himself to solve certain problems. To solve them he used a method that every school child recognizes as invaluable, but that foolosophers generally disregard. It is to state the problem as accurately as possible and then develop the terms in it—to translate the terms in the problems that are really but symbols of facts, into the facts that they symbolize.

The expansion of the terms of a problem is a method also used by the metaphysicians—but in doing so they carefully avoid expanding the terms into facts, they expand them into more terms. As David Hume says: "It is usual for men to use words for ideas and to talk instead of think in their reasoning." There is a very nice school of bourgeois essayists who can thus "prove" any conclusion they desire by the simple but learned method of juggling with the derivations of words.

Proletarian twiddletwaddle is somewhat less scholarly. Instead of derivation it uses revolutionary watchwords and sectarian shibboleths. Proletarians have actually been known to employ the Biblical, honest-to-God, parson-like method of taking a text from their bible, "Workers of the world, unite!" and from it build up the entire tactics of world revolution. On the other hand, Lenin strictly follows the Marxian method of observing facts instead of juggling our ideals and desires; his conclusions have fitted in very well with the facts; he is practical, pragmatic. Take him in tactics: "We in Russia have convinced ourselves by long, painful and bloody experience, of the truth that it is impossible to build up revolutionary tactics solely on revolutionary dispositions and moods. Tactics should be constructed on a sober and strictly objective consideration of the forces of a given country (and of the countries surrounding it and of all countries on a world scale), as well as on an evaluation of the experience of other revolutionary movements." (Left Wing Com., Infantile Disorder). The Bolsheviks take very much after him: the Kerensky government issued some beautiful words saying certain letters should be dropped from the alphabet; but they were not dropped until the Red Guard went into the presses and confiscated them.

We have the shibboleth worshipper with us everywhere. He pleads for "democracy" no matter how much it prove itself "damn mockery." He howls

for dictatorship though there be none to dictate. He urges parliamentary action. He leads us to the promised land with a cloudy day and a pillar by night of "Direct Action" without troubling to state the characteristic of the action, or the precise object against which it is directed.

But in this year of grace 1921, it is perhaps better to busy ourselves not in biting at those with whom we sublimely disagree; but rather to acquaint our fellow slaves with the method of scientific thought. How would this system of expanding the terms of a problem into the terms that they symbolize affect the solution of our daily problems? Take that one about "the right to work." If we show that "right" means "privilege" and that to work under capitalism is to be exploited, then it clearly follows that "the right to work" means "the privilege of being exploited." Its ethical enigma is surely solved, its very real privilege stated in matter of fact terms. Or again take that one: "Capital and labor cannot get along without each other." Expand the term "capital" and "labor" into terms that express their real relation: "The exploiters and the exploited cannot exist as such without each other." It is evident truth; but the realization of its latter form might bring forth different actions than the realization of its former form. But there, a common use by the sons of toil of this method of stating their problems more realistically, might tend to seriously injure the glorious institutions of modern civilization. So let's quit. F. W. T.

## CONCERNING THE EXPLOITATION OF THE FARMER.

(Continued from page 1)

the product which stands in place of wages is their revenue . . . Of course, he tries to sell (his product) as high as possible; but even a sale below value and below the capitalist price of production still appears to him as a profit, unless this profit is claimed beforehand by debts, mortgages, etc."

It appears, then, that what the farmer gets is wages. These are apt to be low, for several reasons. First, on account of the somewhat low standard of living which obtains, largely due, no doubt, to that prevailing in the country of origin of many settlers. Secondly, to the fact that the farmer's wife and family assist in the farm work. And thirdly, to the fact that the farmer raises some part, at least, of his own sustenance.

There are, further, other reasons why the small farmer is poor. The various corporations which sell him things he must have, such as railroad transportation, elevator service, machinery, fuel, binder twine and such like, are possessed of more or less complete monopolies in their several lines. These monopolies, fortified by advantageous tariff rates, enable them to sell their commodities at prices not only above their value but well above price of production. They can, and do, charge all the traffic will bear, realizing in the process enormous surplus profits.

Now, in spite of all these apparent contradictions, the law of value holds good. Total prices cannot exceed (normally) total values and, by the same token, total profits cannot be greater than the total of surplus values. If, therefore, one section of the capitalist class is able to grab all the profit then other sections must do without, and it would appear that the small farmer and his congeners are the unfortunates who go shy.

All of this goes to show why it is that the farmer is so susceptible to reform propaganda, but it also proves that, so long as the capitalist system lasts, by virtue of the economic laws governing that system, the farmer has nothing to hope for in the way of a substantial improvement in his condition.

GEORDIE

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