

WESTERN CLARION

A Journal of
CURRENT
EVENTS

Official Organ of
THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

HISTORY
ECONOMICS
PHILOSOPHY

No. 900

NINETEENTH YEAR.

Twice a Month

VANCOUVER, B. C., OCTOBER 1, 1923.

FIVE CENTS

The Politics of Capitalism

By J. T. W. NEWBOLD

WHILST the capitalist system of production, as we understand it today, with its factory industry, its gigantic undertakings, its wonderful mechanism of manufacture, its infinite variations, its intricate connections and its ever-growing army of wage and salary earning workers, may be said to be the creation of the last century and a half, the private appropriation of land, the accumulation of commodities and their use of capital, the far-reaching exchange of the products of wage-workers, and the development of a considerable class of "free" laborers, had a much earlier origin, and had become the characteristic economy of this country at least two centuries before the Industrial Revolution. In studying the nature of British political institutions, the origins of Britain's traditional attitude towards Sea Power, in the matter of the Empire and of Ireland, the beginnings of the land problem and the establishment of those vested interests which impose a legal check upon all forward movements, it is imperative to look further back than the period of great technical inventions and the rise of machine industry. There are, in deed, diplomatic papers in the keeping of the Foreign Office, dating to the 17th century, and affecting the Newfoundland Fisheries which are not yet available to the student, and which are jealously guarded in the event of their being required in future international conversations. The main features of the Constitution were the product of 17th century class-struggles fiercely contested to obtain legal sanction and armed authority for certain forms of property of a revolutionary nature. The pillars of Society, the venerable families whose services to the State fill the chronicles of fawning historians, the ancestors of the Conservative leaders of today, the respectable lineages whose title-deeds are frequently the insubstantial assumptions of divine ordination, all those elements whom the upstart recruits of trade and finance reinforce and honor for the repute and immemorial sanction that they bring to property were, themselves, the fortunate beneficiaries of political rebellion and social revolution. Their real estate, their official dignity, their clutch on the public purse, their ecclesiastical settlement, their governmental institutions, the ideological myths that they invented and promulgated as first principles of Justice, Right and Liberty, were all the gains of a successful assertion of class-domination, founded on force, and achieved by the most ruthless, corrupt and bloody expedients. The Marxian Socialist accuses the State, the governing class and their lick-spittle scholastic apologists at the judgment bar of history, and draws his mass of evidence from the records of their infamy or their hypocrisy.

When the Feudal system had collapsed during and after the Wars of the Roses, the Tudor Kings and their statesmen built up a powerful national government drawing its authority from the Crown and, in name only, depending on the sanction of the Lords and Commons "in Parliament assembled." Amongst the achievements of the Tudor monarchy was the detachment of the Church in England from the political Church Universal or Church of Rome, and its re-organization as a department of State with the King as "Supreme Governor on Earth." Fol-

lowing upon this revolutionary act, the Crown confiscated the lands and properties of the great Religious Houses or Monasteries, retained a few of them for itself, but sold or granted by far the greater number to the gentry and nobility, who thus came to have a vested interest in the maintenance of the Established Church and the Royal Supremacy. Crown and landowners next proceeded, in more or less legal guise, to appropriate common lands, wastes and charities, and to consolidate their economic and political power. The landed class if they could no longer wield feudal authority in manor and lordship, became the local administrators in the new national State system, presented the energy to their livings, and invested "squire and parson" with the glamour of English Nationalism. In Scotland, the laird and the minister—at any rate, outside the Highlands—assumed an equivalent authority.

This economic basis of Anglo-Scottish patriotism drew the two "nations" together and, at the same time, caused both Anglican and Catholic landowners to unite in defence of "Land and Liberty."

The disposition of the Stuart Kings to treat the Realm as an estate and to build up a centralized despotism, protected by a standing army and the Divine Right of Kings, soon encountered the violent hostility of the merchant and farmer classes. The former experienced and appreciated the fact that the king wanted ready money, ample credit and the Divine Right of taxing and borrowing to any amount. The yeoman farmers were by no means sure that an Absolute Monarch and a Court of favorites like Buckingham would not set to work and appropriate the small landowners in the interests of the nobility. They disliked the ceremonial, creed and government of the Established Church as it existed, and wished to make it reflect their interests and ideals. The King and the larger landowners finally came into collision with the merchants and small landowners, the Monarchy was overthrown and then the merchants and the farmer and shopkeeper elements wrangled through the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, the former relying on Parliament and the Scottish Presbyterian landowners, who shared the religious outlook of the London merchants, and the latter resting on the Army. This divided dictatorship of the middle-class failed, and the richer merchants and the landowners brought back the king. The landowners obtained from Charles II. the abolition of their feudal tenure and made their ownership of the soil, virtually, absolute. The landowners and Charles ruled England and Scotland together. When, in 1689, the King was again expelled for tampering with the Exchequer, Municipal Rights and the Landlords' Church, the merchants and the landlords brought in a German-Dutch prince, caused him to grant or sell the Crown lands for an old song, settled the land tax that they should pay, lent the Crown the millions to defend the new Constitution, made themselves the perpetual creditors of the people by means of the National Debt, set up the Bank of England, and so established on a firm foundation the financial oligarchy who, with the landed magnates, were to rule the country for the next century and a half. Such was the "Glor-

ious Revolution." It was the coping stone, the culmination of the great struggle for Right, the Right of Property in Land and Credit. By a violent upheaval, following on civil war, rebellion and the execution of one sovereign, the propertied classes of Britain obtained the Constitution, the legal sanction and perpetuation of their continuous usurpations. The landed, financial and mercantile classes henceforth governed Britain through the Cabinet (their informal executive committee), the House of Lords, the House of Commons (packed with their paid men), an army and a navy controlled and officered by themselves, and a judicature acting for their King . . . a king "made in Germany."

Rule, Britannia—Britannia, Rule the Waves.

From the time when the members of the landed class settled down to develop their English estates, and certain commercial magnates began to defy with success the restrictions on freedom of trade and employment imposed by the Guilds in Corporate Towns, the manufacture of woollen cloth assumed a capitalist character and the rearing of sheep became a business proposition. Contemporaneously with this change in economic conditions came the discovery of America, the enormous increase in the amount of gold in circulation, and the opening up of lucrative trading, colonising and planting opportunities in India, the West Indies and elsewhere. The gentry of the West and the merchants of London embarked on the overseas traffic with the utmost enthusiasm, bringing to their commercial rivalries an intense religious fervour and patriotic sentiment. From the reign of Elizabeth onwards, there is overwhelming documentary evidence of the connection between the woollen and clothing industries and the voyages of adventure and speculation. "Political and commercial considerations," says the Cambridge Modern History, "were so closely mingled at the opening of the seventeenth century that it is difficult to distinguish the trading enterprise from the military ambition of the period." The Navy League to this day has no more popular saying than that of Sir Walter Raleigh, "Whosoever commands the sea commands the trade, and whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world and consequently the world itself." That became, to all intents and purposes, the watchword of English statesmanship in all that concerned foreign relationships, and is of immeasurable importance in that, to the present time, it remains and ought to remain the guiding policy of all who would perpetuate capitalism in this country.

The Court, the nobility, the gentry and the commercial and shopkeeper classes all participated in short or long-date joint-stock trading or colonising projects to West Africa, Virginia, Russia, China and elsewhere. Out of these developed the great Chartered Companies, like the East India Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, which used the political and military power of the British State to defend and to advance the interests of their immense monopolies, and exercised sovereign rights over vast territories in Asia and America, exploiting the natives and extending their traffic by the most

(Continued on page 7)