

Correspondence

THE PARTY POSITION.

Editor, Clarion:

Since the Clarion has made the change from an official organ of a revolutionary Party to a compendium of "points of view" "C" appears to have been designated official "keynote." During the past year the Clarion pages have been lavishly decorated with his particular "point of view."

At first I considered it a little joke perpetrated by our old comrade to secure partial relief from abyssmal ennui. I thought he was essaying to become the Peck's Bad Boy of the Party in order to start something in the way of discussion. I could not associate the "C" who has written such a really brilliant series of articles on history, in other years, with the tommy-rot appearing in recent months.

Numerous enquiries have been made by ex-members of the S. P. of C. as to the cause of the apparent change in the Party attitude. To all of them I knowingly, submitted the joke theory. This sufficed for a time.

Of late, however, I began to see the light. "C's" contributions kept coming and every once in a while the editorial columns echoed his concept. When I wrote my criticism of G. R. Stirling Taylor's nonsense an editor's note appended informed me that the article in question was published merely to present the Tory-Democratic "point of view." I saw at once that this was merely a plitudinous evasion. That the real reason was not to present but to support this "point of view."

Now, it is not my intention to wrangle with "C" over his latest effusion. It really explains nothing and clarifies nothing. Its manipulation of the Darwinian concept, in the realm of society, is ridiculous in the extreme. His substantiation of Taylor's brand of history would turn any Marxian to smiles rather than to anger. Numerous scattered quotations from the works of Marx and Engels, interpreted to suit himself, are adduced. These could all be rectified and amended with ease.

My purpose however, in this note is to inquire as to the attitude of the S. P. of C. in regard to the British Labor Government, and the Canadian Labor Party? Has the position changed in recent years? The editorial policy and "C's" contributions would readily lead one to such a conclusion. But, may I ask for a definite official statement on the matter? There are many ex-members and members too, no doubt, who would like to know.

In case the answer is in the affirmative I would gladly come to grips in the matter. Although my time is almost wholly occupied between the demands of the boss and the duty of Marxian propaganda, both in doors and out, I feel certain that I could make arrangements to go to Vancouver, at my own expense, and debate the question with any member the Party should choose. I should be glad to affirm the following resolution—Resolved that the British Labor Government is not worthy of working class support.

Yours for Marxism,

J. A. MacDonald,

San Francisco, Calif.

COMRADE Macdonald's letter calls for a few remarks from his "Peck's Bad Boy." At the outset I hasten to inform him there has been no alteration in the official position of the S. P. of C. as he is familiar with it, as laid down in the Party Constitution and Platform and its Manifesto. My articles, contesting the soundness of the Party attitude, of opposition toward political labor reform parties have been published in the Party organ as a matter of privilege. As for the other issues which I have raised, such for example as my pleading for a more thorough-going endorsement and advocacy of constitutional methods of change and of the ideal of political and industrial democracy, as against the doctrine of violent overthrow and military dictatorship, I think I am well within my rights as a member of the Party. On the matter of my privilege to contest the Party attitude toward labor parties I advance on its behalf, for one thing, the known fallibility of human judgments. Further, in calling ourselves scientific socialists, I am afraid we make a mockery of the name of science if we close the door to consideration and discussion of Party positions. Are we following the example of the founders of our school of socialist thought, who never let conviction dull their curiosity on the social problems, but were ever on the alert for the results of the latest quest of science? Surely Dietzgen's labors, his repetitive stressing of the inductive character of modern science, were all in vain if he did not impart to us a rooted impression that all theories, laws, generalizations or adopted positions, those inductively derived no less than the deductive, must ever be sub-

jected to review; which is to say, the open door, the open mind and free discussion tempers all the convictions and certitudes of modern science. And how better, I also suggest, should reconsideration and discussion of our positions arise than of our own volition within the Party, rather than of compulsion from without by the agency of Parties hostile to ours, the contest bringing mutual partizan prides and animosities into play to obscure the merits of the questions at issue. Even those who are against me, and the consensus of opinion seems set that way, should, I think, see value in a digging around the roots of our philosophy when the discussion is conducted in that better spirit among ourselves. No party, no nation, no society can afford to suppress discussion among its members, even touching its fundamentals; it does so at peril of dry-rot and decay. If we assume for a moment that changes are really necessary, how else are they to be brought about?

At this point I find it convenient to make a remark or two in reply to many questions put to me in case the Party adopted my position. I fancy my questioners have reached the conclusion that some plan has been conceived among the comrades in Vancouver for a change of Party position in respect of labor parties, along lines which I have been advocating. Assuming my fancy as correct I may say that their conclusion has no basis in fact. I can assure the comrades I am strictly on my own. And, as I sense it, my ideas seem to have gained no more converts in Vancouver than elsewhere—an individual here or there thinks he understands me and agrees. But, alas, I think they agree with my position mainly on the grounds of mere tactical expediency, rather than upon the grounds of what I presumptuously call "my science and philosophy of it." But I do not wish the Party to go the way I advocate for mere reasons of expediency. My ideal of function for the S. P. of C. is to be doctrinaire, pedagogic, the university of the working class movement in Canada (see issue of June 1, 1923). And I hold that the Party attitude to labor political parties should be the same as it is towards Labor's economic organizations. But the Party must first have a philosophy of such a position based upon science. And its members have not got it. Neither can I give it them. I can only attempt to interest them in the way I see the matter and recommend a fresh study of the sciences and history and of Marx. Especially do I recommend a study of organized group life, preferably of small communities, such as a history of a medieval city or tribal commune; they exhibit better the profounder aspects of institutions as of the ways of life and habits of thought of social beings. For a perspective on reforms I advise a study of the psychology of habit, in its social aspects, and traditions as controlling forces, they being not alone forces of inertia retarding progress, but may be also forces of progress. Such studies should show that progress towards a co-operative society does not altogether depend on intellectual development, but mainly perhaps, on the acquirement of the appropriate dispositions, habits, and traditions and ways of life. Reforms that are formative of these requisites of a co-operative social life are among the ways to such a life; they fit us for socialism. The questions run on such matters as the advantages expected to be gained by a change of Party policy, as to what kind of propaganda was to be used, and many more regarding tactics. Mostly, I think, the questions are illustrative of great intellectual timidity. Speaking for myself, I say again, first get the theoretical background of the new position, the history and the science of it, to inform you; the rest will issue out of it. Take your time and use it. If I am eager, I also am not anxious. It is a far cry to the 16th century renaissance, but so we get perspective. And the world do move! That trickling stream of speculative rationalism, of intellectual adventuresomeness, has so broadened and deepened. Thinking of it I get the feel of the flood. Be bold, it is our tide!

I have not his letter by me, but I believe that Comrade Macdonald offers to debate with any member of the Party, if the Party has changed its official position, the subject to be, that the British Labor

Government is not worthy of working class support. As the Party has not changed its position, the challenge does not stand. Still, it would be interesting to have an article in the Clarion by Comrade Macdonald supporting his contention. I speculate upon his probable line of attack. There is the attack that any revolutionary socialist government might shrivel under, that the personnel had failed to show reasonable administrative capacity, taking into account of course, all the difficulties of their position. Comrade Macdonald knows how human the personnel of the Labor Government is, and he knows all about the difficulties of their position, the distribution of political forces (two and a half working class votes went to the old parties to one for Labor), the state of political intelligence, the state of industry and economic life generally, the international and inter-empire problems, some of them bad ones to say the least. He knows that nothing short of a miracle—but then what's the use of talking about miracles—knowing what he does about politics and political science and the art of government, he cannot fail to appreciate those difficulties. But I hardly think our Comrade's attack will be along that line. I have in mind two theories about government. One, that a people, on the whole, get the government they deserve. Of course if that were true, without exception, the people and their Government would be equal on the plane of worthiness or unworthiness, just how you figured it out.

The other theory of government is that of paternalism, extreme examples of which are absolute monarchies. They rule, or claim to rule, in the best interests of their peoples. Of the two I prefer the first, and, as a matter of opinion I think it is the one true theory that approximates the facts. As a theory I prefer it because it throws responsibility on the people, which if accepted by them tends to their correcting their governments. Have not the socialists replied to the anarchists long ago: "The evils of society are not due, as you say, to the evils of government, but rather, on the other hand, the evils of government are due to the evils of society." If that is true, governing these days is a whole of a job.

If Comrade Macdonald had said "Labor Party" instead of "Labor Government," our task would have been easier, none of those stubborn practicalities to discount, nothing but a paper program and our own predilection for or against. Gee! But then again, when you come to look at it—the question of the respective worthiness of the British working class and their Labor Party. Is the British working class more advanced than the Labor Party and thus worthy of a Party more advanced? I ha'e ma doots Mac!

Well we'll have to speculate till certitude arrives with Mac's article.

Editor Clarion:

Permit me to take exception to your foot note in regards to a statement I made in my article, concerning the attitude of the British Government on the Capital Levy wherein you imply my statement was erroneous.

I have as my authority the official organ of the I. L. P., The New Leader, where they state very clearly that since the inception of the Labor Government to office, that "No effort has as yet been made to introduce the Capital Levy as a government measure or as a Private Member's Bill." Of course if you take my statement literally, perhaps there is some justification for your foot-note, but so far as the facts are concerned I am afraid you will find yourself deeply in error.

I am sure, if you will allow me to anticipate somewhat, that the Labor Government will do well to endorse the "Housing Scheme," let alone the Capital Levy.

Such is the nature of the Labor Government.

Yours for Clarity.

M. J. INGLIS.

Calif., June 28, 1924.

Editor's Note: The Labor Party, previous to the last British parliamentary election, set about to propagate the idea of a capital levy in order, as they said, to relieve the industries of the country from the weight—or as much of it as possible—of the internal national debt. The idea of a capital levy had been promulgated in the war time by spokesmen of other parties, for then other immediate purposes. We are not aware that any responsible advocate of the capital levy on behalf of the Labor Party has given it the color of a "Socialist reform," nor have we found that the Labor Party intended to "put through" a capital levy bill whenever they took office. Instead they have