

The Task of the Hour

OUR good "C" wishes to point out, (Jan. 2), "we are as socialists . . . Marxists . . . because we make use of his dialectic conception." By the same token we might be Hegelians (but we're not.) And "C" is a Marxist—"except the preconception of socialism." It's a funny kind of Marxism! In fact it is just a travesty.

Marx's socialism was the direct inevitability of Marx's dialectic, of Marx's concept and analysis of capitalist society. It rested on his materialism, as squarely as a bridge on its piers. We may repudiate Marx's premises. But we may not accept his premises, and reject his conclusions. The law of surplus value, steadily developed and degraded capitalist society. That law was the result of capitalist organization. It could not be obviated, within capital. It banded an increasing proletariat against a decreasing oligarchy. The appropriation of capital itself was the ultimate result of the prior expropriation of labor. The immanent laws of the system fettered the relations of its organization, until continued social existence became intolerable and incompatible with social necessity. Those laws, developing social contradictions, evoked and nursed, the spirit of revolt. They compelled ever more purposeful working class unity. They developed, and clarified the class struggle. They fostered the conditions of capital dissolution; generated both the means and the ideas of political supremacy. And they inspired the awakened intelligence, the social genius of progress, the aroused will, the clear concept of necessity, and its rational application in the Socialist Commonwealth. The whole Marxian philosophy integrates itself from negation to negation. And we believe Marxian postulates, fundamentally, to be unchallenged. The social conditions of today, —socialised production, an enslaved and seething proletariat, and the unmistakable gathering of class war constitute proof of his synthesis. That the proletariat does not see clearly its servitude is no indication that it cannot see. Tomorrow the quickening touch of a new crisis—an invention, a process, a threat—may sound the final knell of the expropriators: "spring the whole of society in the air," because it has melted the mists of social misunderstanding. Hence we think Socialism is inevitable. Not because it inheres in the "process" of nature. But because it inheres in the condition of capitalist evolution. Nor because there is a watchman in the vaulted silences of space. But because there is an ideal, genetic, reflex, garnered in the heart of man.

Neither do we accept "C's" Darwinian evolution. It may be evolution. But it is not Darwinian. There is no need "to consider the possibility of change in any direction." Because there is no such possibility. It is perfectly true that "infinite variability is the characteristic of the evolutionary process." But it is also true that specific variability is the characteristic of specific process. From Nebulae to Man is a tremendous epic of sequential change. But the sum total of its variability is the inherent variability of the particular. In all mighty pageant of the aeons, every individual thing, or cause, or combination, moves to the mead of must; varies only in the ordered necessity of law-bound beings. Nothing moves in "any direction." Everything moves in the terms of its cyclic law; in the fixed direction—although infinite variety—of constituted living. And according as the terms of cyclic being are generated, and threaded on the moving processions of interaction, so inevitably, being expresses itself specifically, amidst the myriad-hued garmentry of existence. Expresses itself exactly in and through and to the inhering processes of its cycle.

"C's" "Defeat of civilisation once more" is a product of "borrower psychology." Civilisation is the expression of social man, and only with man can it perish. Its form changes. But its core persists; its service immediate to its conditions. It is never "defeated." Always it advances its frontiers. Always it progresses to higher levels in the potentialities

of its static essentials. From primitive man to theocratic antiquity, to autocracies of the Mediterranean, to Roman-Teutonic Feudalism, from the lordship of land to the oligarchy of capital, the prelude to the "aristocracy" of Socialism. A nexus of sequential change, of antecedent and subsequent. But each individual phase, sequent in itself, dominant through and determined by its time condition, fundamentally unalterable in its static setting, its sequence inevitable to the fundament of necessity.

"C" considers "the possibility of a political and social development, towards an institutional life impregnated with the principles of an industrial feudal order of graded . . . status." Whatever gem is contained in that glittering casket of words is like the planet Venus—completely hidden in a canopy of vapor. There is as little possibility of imperialist capital degenerating into feudalistic mongeries, as of a canary becoming a pterodactyl, or man a lemur. If the spirit of feudalism "perhaps resurgent in these days" augurs a return to the principles of the fief, why not the mental reflexes of a still greater antiquity herald the return to Gentilism? Because it cannot, in either case. The fact is, C's tactics are simply word juggling. "The spirit of feudalism lives on into today." And apparently, because of the caste-formularies of that spirit, we are liable to return to its principles. Yet "C's" very next sentence denies the proposition, and derives that spirit (correctly) from political society: "History (C) is the scene of struggle of underlying peoples for political and social freedoms, to retain partial freedoms gained, or recover freedoms lost." A long way of stating a partial truth. History is the record of class struggles, of social masses always enslaved, against their ruling classes, always dominant. At all times, subjection is the essence of political society, dominance the prerequisite of its stability. And within the duration of any society the dominance of its ruling class is practically complete. Hence, "economic freedoms, partial freedoms or lost freedoms," are as pathetic as Omar's "empty glass." "Absolutism" is but another name for slavery, dignified with a tall A. And always, everywhere, slavery holds man, society, to the subjection of its will, not, primarily, because of its power, visible, but according to the experience of that power, in the empirical terms of time condition. The burnings, the brandings, the blindings, the headed pikes of the middle ages are gone. The barricades of "the revolution" are no more. We are not crucified by 1,000's in the city streets, as in Rome and Greece. Nor skinned alive and left writhing at the city gates, like "ancient glory." But the blood of the proletariat, of the enslaved, flows as copiously today on the smoking altars of capital as ever it did in the most imperial days of Absolutism. The death, the degradation may be less exquisitely agonizing, but the sordidness of slavish dominion is an ample as ever. And the changed form is due, neither to the loftier humanity of the ruling classes, nor to the greater intelligence of the slaves, but wholly to the august mandates of technical progress, which governs the issues of humanity.

Neither is it quite true to say, with "C," "Political Liberalism and economic socialism are but successive phases in the struggle," (against Absolutism) "in modern times." Or "mark phases of a trend away from Absolutism." Liberalism and Socialism are both political, both economic, and mutually antagonistic. Liberalism, instead of a "trend away from absolutism," is, on the contrary, the effort of capitalist industry to recreate the world in the image of its own absolutism. Its temporary association with labor was but the expedient means for the creation of its own unquestioned dominion. Thus to couple Liberalism and Socialism is to cloud the fact and delay perception. Nor is Socialism "a trend away from absolutism." It is the vesting of the means of life in social ownership, for social use. Therefore the abolition of all absolutism. Hence

Socialism is not only revolution. But only Socialism is revolution. Socialism is thus economic freedom, i.e., social organization of its material conditions wholly for social benefice. That is democracy. Consequently, the principle of absolutism and the principle of democracy not the "principles of democratic self-government of peoples"—another confusion—are antithesis. And with the coming of economic freedom "complete democracy will be in practice achieved." Not at all a bloodless ideal "to inspire to the attainment of partial freedom."

(Continued in next issue.)

SURPLUS LABOR

MUCH of the labor now done is unnecessary; which means that it is surplus labor. And because so much labor, such as advertising, running cheap sales, etc., is strictly speaking a sheer waste of unproductive effort; the work of the really necessary laborers is longer than it need be.

From wealth-production figures, we get some insight into the question of surplus labor, and how it may be avoided. In the United States, for example, statistics from 1860 to 1919 show that the workers get seventeen per cent. out of the wealth they produce. That is, they receive seventeen cents out of every dollar's worth of wealth created.

Of course, the seventeen cents is the worker's wage for making a dollar's worth of wealth. Another way of looking at it proves that, in a ten hours' working day, the worker earns his keep in two hours and twelve minutes. The other seven hours and forty-eight minutes go to his employers who, however, cannot keep all of this surplus; but must part with some of it to the municipality, the State, the banker, and, often, the landlord, etc.

It may appear that this arrangement is an injustice to the workers, and that it is here mentioned for the purpose of making them very discontented and rebellious. But even Karl Marx himself—the greatest of scientific Socialists—does not think it unjust. As Marx points out, the worker cannot with reason complain; inasmuch as his wages are generally the full value from the sale of a special thing the worker possesses. Apart from that, however, the fact that the worker receives, under Capitalism, only 17c out of every \$1, makes it impossible for him to purchase back the surplus 83c wealth produced; even with the assistance of capitalist-class buyers. This also is another constant cause of capitalistic industrial crises.

It is by buying this special thing at, on an average, its full value, and then making a skilful use of it, that nearly all Capitalists' profits are made. If a dealer sells a man a set of tools worth \$15.00 and the buyer afterwards by constantly using those tools, makes \$10.00 out of them, the seller has "no kick coming," because he got from the buyer the full value of the goods he sold him. When a person sells something and gets, in exchange, its full money value, he has no right (as a general rule) to interfere with the use the buyers put his purchase to.

Now, what the worker sells is his Power to Labor, or labor-power. This is part of his body, and he needs a certain amount of food, clothing, shelter, etc., to produce the power in himself, and to reproduce it in his children to take his place when, like machinery, he shall have become old and worn out. The cost of these necessities and a few luxuries fixes the amount (his wages) he must sell his labor-power to his employer—the money owner. This necessary "cost of production," be it noted, is different from those artificial expenses, often called "overhead," that determine the "price of production."