

that the Communists would have been spared because they were not members of the I. W. W.?

Comrade Thompson tells us that "current convention has made the term politics practically synonymous with parliamentarism." The only "current convention" that I ever knew to hold that politics and parliamentarism were synonymous was the I. W. W. itself, and even the I. W. W. has abandoned that fallacy, according to its own definition of political action in its latest publications.

"The real revolution consists in the workers acquiring possession of the means of production. From this they are restrained by the state, which, true enough, is a reality." . . . "All we could do with the existing state machinery if we did get it, is to get rid of it."

It is not worth our while to abolish the existing State even if it does restrain us from possession of the means of production. This does not require comment, except to remark that the whole significance of the Russian Revolution, not to mention my perfectly good definition of political action, has gone over Comrade Thompson's head.

With regard to the question as to whether the I. W. W. takes part in the class struggle or not, it all depends on what we understand as the class struggle. Between the working class and the capitalist class there is a conflict of economic interests. If we agree that this conflict of interests itself constitutes the class struggle, then it is obvious that the whole working class takes part in the class struggle, irrespective of beliefs and opinions. On the other hand, if we decide that the class struggle is the final clash between the two classes, which will take the political power out of the hands of the capitalist class and place it in the hands of the working class and by so doing put the workers in control of the means of production, then nobody is taking part in the class struggle in this country at present, unless we consider revolutionary propaganda and educational work taking part in the class struggle, a view which is open to question. You may decide the proposition whichever way you please, but note that I am criticizing what the I. W. W. calls its principles and revolutionary propaganda, not its function as a labor union nor its activities in any other respect.

Comrade Thompson tells us that "at best the social revolution is a gory rather than a rosy prospect." This is all the more remarkable when we remember that "bullets may be incidental to the revolution but only incidental."

There are several other questions that I would like to take up, but I have neither time nor space to do so here. I may touch on some of them in future articles on other subjects, but for the present enough has been said already on this subject to place the proposition fairly before all who care to consider it, and that was my main object in writing the articles. I did not write them to please any one. As a matter of fact I was goat hunting, and just wrote the articles to pass the time. As far as I am concerned this ends the discussion, and if Comrade Thompson or any else wishes to come back with further defense of the I. W. W. position, or to prove what a low-down lying scoundrel I am, he is welcome to do so; I will not retaliate further. As I stated before, if the position of the I. W. W. is correct the Socialist position is not, and the only thing for Socialists to do in that case is to abandon their own position and adopt that of the I. W. W. And when I say the Socialist position, I mean the contention that the workers must get control of the political power of the state before they can acquire possession of the means of production, in view of the fact that it is the state that restrains us from possession of the means of production: Comrade Thompson's own statement. On the other hand, if any person thinks he can, by some dialectical twist of the wrist, reconcile those two positions, he will be welcome; he might also be able to reconcile the conflict of classes by the same simple method.

BY I. V. MACKAY

THE articles under the above heading in recent issues of the "Clarion" seem to me to fall short of explaining the I. W. W. to the satisfaction of students who are more interested in understanding that organization than in blaming it for its theoretical crimes. So I will attempt to throw more light on the subject.

In the United States there are between two and three million casual laborers—commonly called "Hoboes"—who work at seasonal occupations, such as logging and harvesting, and beat their way on freight trains all over that country in their efforts to find a job. These men get no protection from the law, and the conditions of their life "on the job" or in their camps by the side of the railroad—known as "jungles"—and in the county and city jails—where they are periodically placed for the crime of having no money—are very rough and hard. These conditions develop in them the archaic virtues of self-reliance, endurance and loyalty to their group, also the peculiar outlook on life that appears in the I. W. W. song books issued before 1916.

Hobo slang has been taken over almost entirely by the I. W. W.—such words as "Scissorsbill," "Dingbat," "Fussytail," "Gaycat" (afterwards called "Sab-cat"), were in use amongst hoboes before the I. W. W. was organized—and some of these words are beginning to appear in the vocabulary of respectable socialists who have no use for sabotage.

Until 1916 the I. W. W. were few in numbers compared to the disturbance they made (about 14,000) and were too busy fighting the horrible industrial conditions to give theories and abstractions the attention they perhaps deserve. The average member of the I. W. W., like the average member of every other organization, is not adapted to study intricate sociological problems. They fall for anything that seems sensible, and in the deeper issues they are swayed by their leaders.

It was commonly understood by the rank and file that "Political Action" was the act of dropping a ballot in the bosses ballot box and letting the bosses count it. "Direct Action" was to organize until the slaves were strong enough to take over the industries by force and, incidentally, to get better conditions as they went along. Words such as Economic Action, Economic Determinism, Parliamentary Action, and so forth seeped down to them from the learned critics in the S. L. P., and the potential Congressmen in the S. P. of A.

About 1916 the "Wobblies" organized about 30,000 agricultural workers, mostly harvest hands, and caused the American Farmer great distress and the following year they organized most of the loggers in the great strike in the woods. Up until this time the American "State" was decentralised and comparatively weak. It seemed to be the policy of Washington not to interfere in local disturbances. So when the Wobs conducted a free-speech fight or a strike they were opposed only by the local authorities and the authorities were hampered by the tax-payers kicking at the high cost of "justice." Lenin tells us that the "State" becomes stronger and more centralised with pressure from within or without, and the United States went into the war in 1917.

There was a little incident happened in Seattle that showed how the Wobs were going. They had taken in more numbers in the previous two years than they could assimilate and most of the laborers down town were sympathetic to them—many of the local merchants displayed two union cards in their windows, A. F. of L. and I. W. W. I was at a "Wobby" social; the entertainment was singing, dancing and prize fights, and some of the "Petty Larceny" element (that is the way they refer to retail merchants) donated the prizes for the contests. An old Wob was lamenting the organization turning "yellow" as "those birds would not be allowed on our platform in the good old days."

The leaders of the I. W. W. were given long terms in jail and it became dangerous to be caught with a Wobbly card. It is very dangerous yet in some states.

The Russian Revolution came along, led by Political Actionists, and confused the rank and file of

the I. W. W. The membership dwindled to those hard cases who cannot learn by experience so it is not surprising to find contradictions in their recent pamphlets.

I do not, however, agree with F. J. McNey in his harsh criticism of the following paragraph from page 84 of the "The Lumber Industry and its Workers."

"Labor is the creator of capital, and existed before capital; but without capital, labor could produce only on a very limited scale. On the other hand, capital without labor could produce nothing. The I. W. W. does not propose to abolish capital. What it does propose is to abolish capitalists. A capitalist is one who owns capital and lives off profits produced by workers. Capital is necessary to society; but the private ownership of capital is not necessary; on the contrary, it is responsible for most of the evils from which society suffers today. If all capitalists were to pass out of existence industry would go on as usual, for it is run entirely by workers. With a system of industrial democracy capital will still exist but it will be owned and controlled by the useful members of society instead of by a parasite class."

I contend that this paragraph is sound educational tactics and also sound economics. The average worker understands by the term "Capital" wealth used to produce more wealth and by "capitalist" one who uses wealth to exploit others. This is the sense in which bourgeois propagandists have taught the workers to understand these two words and in using them in that sense the writer of the paragraph is talking to the workers in language they understand—which is sound educational tactics. When we consider "capital" and "capitalist" in this sense the paragraph becomes intelligible and consistent and economically sound as obviously we do not wish to destroy that part of wealth which is used to produce more wealth while obviously we do wish to eliminate those who use it in the exploitation of labor. The aim thus stated is identical with that of the Marxist. The difference is merely one of language. Too many intellectuals and Marxian purists are prone to place much importance on mere words whilst losing sight of the things for which the words are but symbols.

THE FARMER'S MISERY.

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selves to have been in the past, today you are approaching a recognition of the fact that as a producer you are linked up with other producers and that the solution of your problem as an agricultural worker lies in the solution of the social problem, including the problem of exploitation of wage workers in industry. We ask you to read our literature and to study the position as we lay it down. Then you will understand the factors governing your sphere of production, and you will find common ground with all producers of wealth, as against those who produce none yet who own most of it.

HERE AND NOW.

HERE and Now registrations are like those of the thermometer these days: up and down. Even "on the average" they are not what is required to maintain a healthy circulation. Like the frozen one's with the goloshes and neck mufflers we await with anxiety the financial thaw.

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