

CLASS REPRESENTATION NO ACCIDENT

ANYONE who imagines that the present attitude of the farming people is a passing fancy will be disillusioned if he reads the words of Mr. Wood, president of the United Farmers of Alberta. Here are a few paragraphs from one of his addresses:

"The plutocratic classes, the manufacturers, organize as a class, and the bankers organize as a class, but they co-operate with each other after they are organized. The democratic classes are organizing because they are forced to do it. Through organization alone can we develop strength.

"We have to develop a class opinion, make our class articulate. We must mobilize class opinion, and then mobilize votes behind it. Every industrial class in Canada has got to do the same thing.

"When we get all classes thoroughly organized," he said, "and with proper representation through proportional representation, which I understand we are to have soon, then each class will send its representatives to the legislature and parliaments according to its numerical strength, and these representatives will go as our lobbyists, not hired, but belonging to us body and soul, and go there to settle class differences.

"We are human, the same as everyone else, and I do not deny that if we were the only class organized we would make unjust demands; but other classes will organize and resist unjust demands, and out of this reaction they will find a common ground of settlement.

"The plutocratic classes, now organized and ruling affairs in all countries, have their existence wrapped up in the principle of competition. They have got to maintain it or they cannot maintain their advantage.

"When you get proportional representation, and every group is organized according to strength, then the party system will be destroyed."

THE NEW ORDER

THE recent general election in Ontario and the by-elections for the House of Commons clearly indicated that for the present the division of the people into two historic political parties is to give way to a division into classes—the basis of division being occupation. This gives rise to some very interesting reflections.

In the past a man was elected to represent a certain geographical unit with the understanding that on assuming office he would forget all about the unit, except when it came to the erecting of public buildings and the division of the federal resources. He was supposed to represent his party, and he usually did so—even when he was opposed to the policies that were being adopted.

At times, members of local legislatures and of the Dominion House forgot both their geographical unit and their party affiliation, and thought only of race, language or church connection. The fear of a revolt along this line has always kept the old line parties from instituting necessary reforms. Even under party government, the dominant party in Canada has not always ruled. How will things be under new conditions? At times, too, members of legislatures and Parliament forgot every tie—political, social and religious—and sold themselves to the highest bidder. Will this be as common under the new order? That is a vital problem.

It will be generally accepted that direct representation of churches and races would lead to a national disaster. Even those who insist upon or wink at race recognition in the appointment of judges and civil servants (and there is nothing more disgusting and unpatriotic than this), would not wish this policy to be pursued in the election of members to Parliament. If the new division of people into classes cuts clean across the old and not uncommon division according to race, religion and language, it may be not an unmixed evil.

If, however, we are to have class representation in Parliament, and such has been decided upon by Labor and by the United Farmers, in some of the provinces, then there must of necessity be a lining up of all classes. Labor is now well organized. It will be in order for the great middle classes—using a hated term, because no other suitable word has yet been found—to organize in order to express their wishes in parliament. For instance, why should not the universities, as such, have here as in the Old Country some representative? Why should not the backing force of the country, the retail dealers, the wholesale dealers and the manufacturers have some adequate voice in shaping legislation and in actual administration of public affairs? Having once launched upon this new scheme it is necessary to carry it through to a logical conclusion. Probably the solution will be attempted in proportional representation.

Under the new system a man will lose his identity in his class, just as under the old system he lost it in a party. Of necessity people will become more narrow in their sympathies than they were under the old system, but they will in all probability take a keener interest in legislation of all kinds. It is difficult to say whether the man whose sympathies are altogether with his own class, is a better or worse citizen, than he who has only a vague or shadowy interest in the affairs of his country. If in the past

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we have had too great apathy on the part of the electorate, we shall no doubt in future have too great zeal on the part of some citizens whose class affiliations are strong and national sympathies uncertain.

The line-up in Ontario comes at a fortunate time. The electors of Canada will be interested in knowing how the farmers and the laboring classes will pull together, and will be particularly interested in their administration of affairs. Should there be any attempt at class legislation, there will be a counter-revolution, but should there be the fairness and honesty that we have every reason to expect, there seems to be no doubt but that the next Federal contest will be worked out on class lines.

It does seem a little bit absurd, for those, who in the past, have sought class privilege, and who have obtained it, so that they are now wealthy beyond computation, while many equally deserving and honorable citizens are in want—it does seem absurd for these people now to be raising the cry of danger. The farmers of Canada are just as able, as public spirited, as careful to conserve and develop the resources of the land, as that small band of professional plunderers who have disgraced our good name and squandered our inheritance.

And yet we have to be sorry that government by class has come in Canada. True government should not emphasize class distinction, but eliminate it. Let us hope that the step now taken is but a protest against the iniquity of the old order, and a necessary preparation for a new system under which in legislation and administration, all citizens will have equal privilege and responsibility.

THE GREAT FALLACY

NEVERTHELESS, the principle of class representation is un-Christian and unfair, even though it may be necessary for the time being. It is un-Christian because it is selfish. A well-known citizen, of low type, made this famous speech, "When a man and woman get married; one of them has to be boss and the other one has to be licked, and the man might just as well be boss." Anyone can imagine conditions in that household. So in the political household, under the class rule, we may have in force the principle of "Each man for himself, until he is checked by others." That is a monstrous policy. It is also an unfair policy because some important classes will never be strong enough numerically to make themselves felt and their condition will grow from worse to worse. True progress comes about not through the conflict of opposing forces, but through the triumph of the Christian virtues, the application of the Golden Rule. At this time of the year it will do us no harm to hear again the angel song—Peace on Earth and to men goodwill. What gives us comfort is not the triumph of the principle of the class rule, but the knowledge that the leaders in the new ruling classes are men of a high type, men who while they are loyal to the organizations they represent, have even a greater loyalty to the Dominion and the Empire, and a respect for the rights of all men. In the long run the government of a country is on a par with the character of the men who are elected as representatives.

THE WARRING CLASSES

The reapers stood where the harvest lay
Ripe for their reaping, day after day,
And they bickered and bickered the time away—
While God sent sunny weather.
Now this man struck at his brother's scythe,
And laughed in his folly to see him writhe,
When he nicked the weaker blade a tithe;
And each debated whether,
If he broke his brother's blade off short
God would be pleased at the neat retort,
And with noisy girding of such-like sort
They ran the length of their tether.
Oh, grand the harvest some day shall be
In this field that stretches from sea to sea
When the workers stand in it knee by knee,
And swing their scythes—together!
—Grace MacGowan Cooke.

WHO SHOULD SUFFER?

THERE lies in the prison cells in Winnipeg a young lad of fourteen years, committed to await his trial on a charge of murdering his own father. Should he be found guilty it will be necessary for the judge to impose a punishment in keeping with the offence. This raises the very pertinent question:—In cases of juvenile delinquency who should bear the punishment? With the case before the courts now, we have nothing whatever to say, since the trial has not taken place, and the facts are not fully known. Rather do we desire to deal with the question in an abstract way for it is a question that concerns not one or two unfortunate

youths, but every lost one of them who goes astray. Who is to blame? If it is not the boys themselves, why should they receive the punishment?

Let us take a familiar case. Here is a young lad of sixteen, guilty of theft and forgery. For two years he has been running the streets, wild, reckless, irresponsible. His parents have had no control over him. The school no longer numbers him among its members. Not having an occupation and needing money he took the easy way of getting it. Not having clothes he stole them; and so he is awaiting the judgment of the twelve jurors—any one of whom might have had a son in the same position, had he been as neglectful as the father of this poor lad. That, in short, is the whole story. It is a tale of parental incapability or neglect. Yet because of this neglect the young lad has to suffer. Why not let him free and punish the real culprit?

Now, this is only an instance, and the parent must be taken as representing the whole range of influences operating upon the growing boy. There is the home—capable of developing all that is lovely and pure, but often through neglect, bad temper, evil example, creating and fostering all that is unholy and vicious. There is the school, powerful for good, but often ignoring the higher development of the soul, because of pressure from parents, or because of inability to depart from the custom of centuries. There is also the social environment with all that it has created—the dance hall, the moving picture show, the sensational novel, and all those other enticements, which while proper in their place and in right proportion, are yet dangerous in the extreme, when allowed to have unfettered sway in the lives of children. And when any of these agencies through incompetence or neglect, causes a child to slip and fall, it is the agency and not the child which should be held up for punishment.

THE REAL COURT

DOWN the street every day goes an old man—feeble, broken-down, spiritless. In his young married life he was dissipated, a frequenter of gambling dens, a devotee of his own fireside. His life was a story of studied neglect, and selfish indulgence. As his boy grew, he took his own counsel, drifted away, finally committed murder and in the same brawl lost his own life. Poor old man! It is pitiful to see him now, bearing the burden. Thank heaven, he shows he is bearing it! Would to God he had felt it in earlier years, and saved himself this awful living death! Even if earthly judges place the guilt upon the one who is immediately to blame, the Heavenly Judge makes no errors. He goes back to first causes. Human courts are at best imperfect in their decisions.

Poisoned Literature

There is a book store on the avenue. In it are cheap, poisonous productions put up in a form that attracts the growing boy—books full of action, but full also of untruth and evil suggestion. The readers of these books—we know them well—with their unbalanced minds their inability to think seriously, and to judge fairly, their incapacity for real enjoyment and for noble pleasures—these readers, how many of them, sell their birthright for this mess of pottage? For their failure to attain to sterling manhood who is to blame, but the unscrupulous merchant, and those guardians of youth—the mother, the father and the teachers in the school? If we are to have gibbets let us be sure that the right parties are suspended on them.

THE MOVIES

UNQUESTIONABLY the greatest menace to young life to-day is the moving picture show. The censors are not wholly lacking in sound judgment but the mode of appeal in the moving picture is such as to inflame the imagination of childhood unduly. No child can live at high tension for an hour and come out of his experience unharmed. Reading a sensational novel is bad enough, but it takes time. When a child views a film production the successive emotions crowd one upon the other in a never-ending stream, and wreck his peace of mind. But the censors sometimes are lacking in good judgment. Charlie Chaplin is endurable when he is witty. He should be ruled out when he is coarse and unmannerly. Better hit a boy with a club than offend his finer sensibilities! When parents allow their children to dissipate until the esthetic and moral senses are blunted, they should bear the punishment. Unfortunately they do not always receive it.

All of this, of course, is no condemnation of the moving picture when it is rightly used for the purpose of education, inspiration and pure entertainment.

All over this land there are children going to ruin, not because they are deliberately bad, but because they are misguided or directed. Who should bear the blame? Is it not true for parents, and play-wrights, for public officers who are responsible for all community appeals to child life—is it not true that all of these went to school to learn their duties and their opportunities? Verily, the way of the growing boy is not an easy one, in this restless busy age.