

Red or Yellow?

BY J. A. McDONALD.

THE question of whether a revolutionary or reform attitude should be adopted by working class organisations in their political struggles appears to be a live one at present. Even parties that have hewn to the revolutionary line since their inception are now flopping over to the more popular advocacy of remedial legislation. To substantiate their new position every known form of reasoning is being called into action.

From an editorial in a recent issue of the Western Clarion (No. 925) I am extracting the following gem: "Agreement with the doctrine of the class struggle does not necessarily imply exclusive devotion to policies of immediate revolution." This conclusion is reached after a quotation from Brailsford: New Leader, September 19th, 1924, is produced. The editorial contention seems to be that there is a close relationship existing between the I. L. P. and the Socialist movement and that the theory of the class struggle is common to both.

The publication of the full article from which the Brailsford quotation was taken would portray a condition not quite so satisfactory for illustrating the revolutionary relationship as the editorial in question implies. (*) Then, the veteran editor—Brailsford—reminds us that once in his youth while addressing an I. L. P. audience he over-reached himself to the extent of stressing the class struggle. He was promptly taken to task by one of the old leaders who kindly explained that "we never speak of the class struggle in the I. L. P." A glance at the report of the last I. L. P. Conference suffices to show that less emphasis is placed on the class struggle now than ever before.

But this matter of "agreement" with the doctrine is worthy of some attention. The easiest way of disposing of an issue is to agree with it and then bury it. Even the defunct Second International agreed that there was a class struggle. But this agreement did not prevent them, when the opportunity arrived, displaying that they had not the slightest idea of what the class struggle meant. It was a matter of expediency to endorse it and more expediency to forget it. So with the I. L. P.

We do not have to cross the pond in order to demonstrate the futility of making room for a reference to the struggle of classes in a party platform and, then, conveniently ignoring it so that a far distant revolution should be the objective rather than an immediate one.

Here in the U. S. A. the Socialist Party has amply supplied the necessary material. For more than twenty years their lengthy reform platform has always managed to embrace some kind of a reference to the class struggle. There was a tradition in

the movement that whatever was omitted the class struggle must be mentioned. During some election campaigns it would appear about the beginning of the platform, while on other occasions it found its way to the end, but it was always fortunate enough to be included.

The numerous immediate demands in the same program received the attention of every party speaker. They wanted the abolition of child labor, government ownership of the railways, or a reduction in the cost of living but no one had time to explain the significance of the class struggle. In their greed for petty reforms, that practically every other party was espousing, they could not exclusively devote themselves to policies of immediate revolution. When all the reforms were introduced and applied the revolution would be here and of course the class struggle would take care of itself.

The logical outcome of this situation was that the class struggle became so worn out and feeble that it couldn't stand up. It became obsolete. In the recent presidential campaign the Socialist Party gave up the ghost and joined the LaFollette parade. They willingly accepted the platform of the new party. Here there is no mention of the class struggle at all. The old immediate demands are all present. They appear just as healthy and vigorous as when they made their home in the Socialist program.

La Follette and his gang are not clamoring for an immediate revolution. They do not even anticipate a remote one. Capitalism must be saved and a reform program alone can save it. So we have the spectacle of Debs, Berger, and Hillquit lining up with the old party leaders to save the nation and the constitution. As Rudolph Spreckels, one of the Third Party millionaires, so well stated: "We've got to vote the Socialist ticket to save capitalism."

The Socialist Party of Canada is now adopting a policy that, ultimately, can only land it where the S. P. of A. is today. The sympathetic attitude taken towards all other groups in the labor movement, together with its flirtatious disposition anent reforms are the primary essentials for a revolutionary funeral. The claim that the leaders of the S. P. of C. are better equipped with class knowledge than those of the S. P. of A. and consequently, will be able to stem the tide of dissolution is not substantiated by the facts.

There has been a number of capable economists and historians in the S. P. of A. Untermann, Boudin, Lewis, and others have produced much in the various departments of social science. Regardless of the fact that exception must be taken to some of their conclusions we must admit that they have contributed greatly to a popularisation of Marxism. This did not suffice to preserve them from anti-socialist action.

While in theory we were supplied with profound treatises on value, surplus value, ground rent, and wages the application of such knowledge was thwarted by their misconception, and consequent belittlement, of the class struggle. At the national S. P. of A. convention in 1916 Untermann, in supporting the ban on Oriental immigration, stated that "when Marx said 'workers of the world unite' he did not mean for them to come to the United States to unite."

In Canada the Canadian Labor Party appears to possess all the earmarks of the S. P. of A. and is undoubtedly heading in the same general direction. A reference to the class struggle is likely contained in its platform to provide something in the way of a revolutionary atmosphere but this can be discarded with impunity when occasion demands.

The opinion has been expressed that the S. P. of C. cannot longer function in its present condition. Audiences are small, interest is waning, and finances are practically non-existent. So something must

be done in the will to live and this something resolves itself into an alignment with a larger and more influential group. It appears to me that much of the lethargy prevailing in the S. P. of C. is due to the obsolete methods of carrying on propaganda work still in vogue.

Take the Clarion for example. The front page which should always be devoted to some live current event, analysed in the light of Marxism, is generally reserved for lengthy quotations from Veblen, Beer, Hegel, or some other ponderous authority and consequently makes an uninviting appeal to the average reader.

Then, again, the articles are too long. Even if sound, they absorb too much space in proportion to the size of the paper. They would be well suited to the semi-feudal conditions obtaining in the land of "three mile prayers and half-mile graces" but in this age of Capitalism, in a rapidly developing land, the worker, looks for shorter, simpler, more direct analysis of his social problems. This can easily be supplied without sacrificing anything useful.

Again the apparent effort to produce style at the expense of clarity is harmful to a propagandist paper. In recent times the Clarion has been an innovator of cubist phraseology. When one wanders through an article of six or seven columns he still remains in doubt of the writer's meaning. This is not as it should be. Scientific explanations from the old masters should be made assimilable for the common worker who is not a profound dialectician and who must have his education presented in a way he can understand it.

"THE PARADISE OF THE POOR"

IT may be said that these two fundamental instincts of life—bread and love—by their functioning maintain a social equilibrium in the life of animals and especially in Man.

It is love which causes, in the great majority of men, the principal physiological and psychological expenditure of the forces accumulated in larger or smaller quantities by the consumption of daily bread, and which the daily labor has not absorbed or which parasitic inaction has left intact.

Even more—love is the only pleasure which truly has an universal and equalitarian character. The people have named it "the paradise of the poor," and religions have always bidden them to enjoy it without limits—"be fruitful and multiply"—because the erotic exhaustion which results from it, especially in males, diminishes or hides beneath the pall of forgetfulness the tortures of hunger and servile labor, and permanently enervates the energy of the individual; and to this extent it performs a function useful to the ruling class.

But indissolubly linked to this effect of the sexual instinct there is another, the increase of the population. Hence it happens that the desire to eternize a given social order is thwarted and defeated by the pressure of this population which in our epoch assumes the characteristic form of the proletariat—and the social evolution continues its inexorable and inevitable forward march."

E. Ferri: "Socialism and Mod. Science."

Are not Ferri's conclusions now obsolete, due to the dissemination of birth control methods amongst the people who dwell in "the paradise of the poor"?

Is not the normal pain-cost (large families) of obeying the Biblical injunction, over-balanced by the pleasure-gain as the result of the intervention of Margaret Sangster and the birth-control leagues?

Modern science in the realm of love and war where the proletariat meet on an universal and equalitarian basis—presents itself as a wonderful and fearsome weapon of emancipation—by extinction!

F. C.

(*) Editor's Note: Fair criticism is as valuable as it is rare.

Here's what we actually did say:

"A statement like this (Brailsford: New Leader, September 19, 1924) is never to be found in labor party or I. L. P. electioneering literature: "The class struggle is a raw fact, which no gentle idealism can disguise. It is the motive force without which history is unintelligible: it is the plain name for most of the processes which make up the practical life of every day. So long as a small minority in every nation owns the land, the machines and the banks, so long as this minority can levy a toll before the rest of us may work, so long as its uncontrolled power over machinery, raw materials and credit governs us in every detail of our daily lives, so long must we choose between slavery and struggle." By which it may be seen, incidentally, that agreement with the doctrine of the class struggle (since Brailsford is a reformer) does not necessarily imply exclusive devotion to policies of immediate revolution."

There is no further need to show that Comrade McDonald imposes a viewpoint upon us which we did not present. We have set some lines in bold face type so that they may not escape his attention this time. We did not say the I. L. P. or the labor party were in agreement with the doctrine of the class struggle, but we did say that Brailsford was, and he is a reformer, and he is not devoted to policies of immediate revolution.