

That Dictatorship of the Proletariat

ONE often marvels at the storm the above phrase has called into being.

Some clamorous idealists, grasping at the shadow of things, and entirely missing the substance, have worked it overtime. Notably members of the Communist Party.

It sounds so devilish businesslike, and maybe revolutionary too.

At any rate, it has almost come about in some quarters that if you don't proclaim yourself a supporter of the "dictatorship," then you are taboo.

It is really excruciatingly funny the way these emotional saviours of the working class, dictate about the dictatorship, but it becomes tragic on the other hand, to find temperamental personalities like Debs linking hands with shuffling Kautsky, and affirming their belief in "democracy" as opposed to dictatorship. And to find the S P of G. B. also on that side of the fence, is to add pathos to the tragedy.

Let us see if we can't put this proposition as simply before the working class as we can.

First of all, no matter where classes are found, in "democratic" republics, or monarchies, we are certain to find our class in the position of an enslaved class. This shameful and degraded position is well known; and its consequent degenerating influence on the mentality of the slaves is equally a matter of record.

We are ruled by a set of exploiters. Every government is but the instrument of coercion; the club they beat us with.

The problem before us is simply this: To make our fellow-slaves aware of this fundamental fact. To acquaint them through Marxian literature, which is a critical commentary on the capitalist system, of the process by which these idle, brutal exploiters manage to separate the laborers from the product of their toil. To make them understand that labor produces all wealth, whilst all that the capitalists produce could be utilized by a truck farmer.

This is a slow job, true enough; teaching our fellows who are so slow to catch on, but we are powerfully assisted by growing discontent brought about by the uncertainties of existence, which need not be entered into here.

However, we can be sure of this, that neither individual nor society can survive, unless they adapt themselves to continually changing conditions. Having by analysis convinced ourselves of our position in society, and the historic drift of events, we Socialists know that mankind are now rapidly approaching a point, where profound and far-reaching changes are bound to take place. These changes will involve much suffering without a doubt, but that is unavoidable, while the mass of humanity fails to understand that unceasing change is the unchanging law of nature.

If the masses were aware that a deadlock is almost reached under the present antiquated, anarchic, and wasteful methods, between the mode of production, and the manner of distribution of wealth, they could take council and eliminate the trouble very easily.

But the masses do not know; and will not know, till by bloody blundering, and mischievous muddling, experience has taught them a few things.

But, back to the "dictatorship."

To remedy our deplorable condition, we find it necessary to rally recruits, or make Socialists, till there are enough of us desirous of a change, to bring it about. Between us and our goal, the ownership of industry, will stand the organized band of exploiters, and their numerous hangers-on and lackeys. They have to be suppressed, and as Lafargue said: "Their suppression is a question of time and opportunity."

Mark, not a question of this or that particular way of gaining power, but of opportunity.

At present, most people have the vote, and this vote has become almost a fetish to some. But a vote merely signifies a wish. A million votes for a revolutionary ticket, mean that many voters wish

for a revolutionary change. But a wish-bone was never as good as a backbone. Some impatient souls, seeing this, have jumped to conclusions, a very unscientific thing to do.

Behind the phrases "Direct Action," "Mass Action," "Physical Force," lurk a lot of these jumpers. At present, they have a new phrase, to warm up their revolutionary fire, viz., the title we are discussing.

De Leon fathered, or was the greatest expounder of the theory that "Ballotting is all moonshine, without big industrial unions to back up the vote, and lend might to right."

That is another vexing question that has roused more discussion probably in America amongst Socialists, than any other.

There is no space here to take it up, but we shall merely offset these positions with the remark of F. Engels, in his "Origin of the Family," to the effect that the suffrage was the thermometer indicating revolutionary pressure, and when it reached its boiling point among the laborers "they as well as the capitalists, will know what to do." Exactly. It is our business to spread an understanding of this.

It is also important to note, and carefully too, that the capitalists, as well as the laborers, will know "what to do."

Professor Ross is on record as saying, on his return from Russia, that he "couldn't imagine American business men lying down as easily as the Russian bourgeoisie did."

The exploiters are on the alert everywhere, and no one need have any doubt as to what they will do. They will shelter behind democratic phrases and forms as long as suitable, and for a good reason. While the masses have a firm belief in their "equal rights" as citizens, a devout faith in "democratic" and civilized procedure as exemplified in balloting, etc., it would be sheer folly for the rulers to throw off their mask, and reveal the naked steel of the sword.

It is a good tactical advantage for them, when they can cry "The revolutionists are acting in an unlawful and unconstitutional manner when they advocate mass or direct action to right their wrongs, while the ballot is at hand."

The scientific Socialist therefore, is not such a fool as to put that weapon in his hand.

In this battle to influence public opinion, it is important to retain as long as possible all concessions won by our fathers in the past, and make what use of them we may.

If it is desirable on the part of the capitalists to see the working class forced into the position of outlaws, it is equally desirable on the part of the workers, that the onus of breaking these laws shall rest on their enemies' heads: If the "Socialists" had quit Albany of their own accord, if Victor Berger had refused to go to Congress, it wouldn't have made half the impression on the working class it has done, to see panicky capitalist legislators breaking their own laws, and revealing their bourgeois dictatorship masked behind loud sounding and prettily turned lip worship of democracy.

Those actions were distinct victories for the working class. They revealed the sham. They served to show what a revolutionary working class may expect. It is unfortunate that the benefit is being reaped, for the present, by a motley array of mountebanks and rascals masquerading as Socialists; using the prestige of a well-meaning, but misguided man like Debs.

But these revelations of the evil intent of the capitalist class, should not drive the workers to the extremist position represented by the phrase-mongering group. That is what is to be feared. Precisely that is what the capitalists would like to see. Engels has pointed this out in his "Retrospect." De Leon, in "As to Politics,"—Karl Radek in his letter to German Socialists, also showed the advantages of having a political standing, and his letter was approved by Lenin. So the point is: Socialists should above all else be Realists, be alive to the

facts of a situation. They should know how to adapt themselves to the changes in political conditions.

It is worse than folly to laud the features of political democracy, acclaim it as the greatest gift of the ages. Such actions serve but one purpose. That purpose is—fooling the very class that support for a revolution must come from.

The capitalists are not deceived by the forms and phrases of political democracy. They are most emphatically not deceived by revolutionists who proclaim the virtues of democracy. The one's who are deceived and confused, are the ill-informed slaves, grasping always at illusions and afraid of realities. To lay down hard and fast rules of conduct in the onward march of the slaves and then to find the rules hamper and clog progress, is to invite trouble in plenty.

Economic conditions change, political conditions, or the conditions affecting the policy employed in combating capital, would necessarily also change. To adopt permanent and unchanging codes, rules, war cries, and so on, is therefore sheer nonsense.

Be Realists; free your minds from warping traditions. Adapt your organization to the changes about it or perish. Supposing by some strange chance a Revolutionary Socialist ticket polled an overwhelming vote in November, at some election here in the United States. What folly it would be to then calmly wait as by capitalist laws laid down, till the following March to oust the gang of parasites from their privileges. Such a situation is not likely to appear, but some socialists are so bewitched by the word "democracy" that it has come to take the place of reality with them. It would be on a par with the conduct of the Sabine men, who expostulated with the Romans for abducting their women, and showed unmistakably that the action was unlawful, immoral and unjustifiable, but still they couldn't understand why the Romans, admitting all this, refused to give up the women.

A revolutionary working class, when arrived at maturity, will suppress its enemies. During the period that is required for the change from production for profit to production for use, if this change occurs, undoubtedly the class in power then, as all classes have in the past, will establish a dictatorship. Disorders, attempts at counter revolution, and so on—anything that tends to disrupt and throw back the race to lower forms of life, will have to be put down,—by force.

But, when the change is accomplished, and particularly when a new generation has grown up, free from the demoralizing, degenerating influences of class exploitation, the need for dictatorship will have disappeared, and it will cease to be.

A free working class cannot coerce itself. And all other classes will have disappeared. So we see, the thing is the attaining of power to suppress the parasitic strata of society.

That is a question of time.

In the course of time, there will inevitably also appear the question of how?

That is a question of opportunity.

A working class guided by common sense, and unbefogged by "Kautskian learning," or "Debsic sentiment," will not hesitate when the time is ripe, and they are ready, to use the most sensible and convenient way to get on top, and dictate to the other fellows, till their day is done. So, don't become enmeshed in these hairsplitting wrangles; but stick to our task of "wising up" the slaves.

Even when the workers desirous of economic freedom, are in a majority, even if they have power in their hands, it is inconceivable that they should immediately be able to abolish all vestiges of capitalism. Not in weeks or in years, will such a transition be accomplished.

And in Russia today even though the masses were undoubtedly in favor of Bolshevik rule, and are still, yet war weariness, disorganization, disease, and all the countless miseries and annoyances they are so bravely enduring, would cause those elements who

(Continued on Page Seven)