

Professor Leacock Riddled

(Continued From Page Five)

time? Can we rely upon such a man for an impartial presentation of what he chooses to designate the "Unsolved" Riddle of Social Justice?

"The one thing that is wrong with Socialism," says Professor Leacock, "is that it won't work." The professor writes of Socialism as though it were some kind of a plan of a new society, all sealed and blue-printed and worked out to the final details, and presided over by an ideal State. In fact, he does further on so define the Socialist program, "Let the State take over all the means of production."

Assuming, for the purpose of discussion, that such is indeed Socialism, how does the professor know that it won't work? Has it ever been tried? Has Mr. Leacock ever had the opportunity of observing the results of such trial? Yes, indeed: During the recent war, the "State" in many of the belligerent countries practically took direct control of all the means of production and distribution, and, in fact, extended its control even into the private life of the civilian population. Great Britain is as good an example as any. Does not Mr. Leacock know that a greater efficiency in production and distribution was achieved there by State control than ever before? Does he not know that no less a person than Winston Churchill, observing the successful results of such State control, was moved to publicly announce that he was converted to Socialism as a consequence.—Mr. Churchill's conception of Socialism being apparently on a par with Mr. Leacock's own? Of course the riddle of social injustice was not solved thereby. But the point is that it worked, whereas Mr. Leacock says it will not work. Obviously it is not any particular system which he believes will not work but only anything which has the name of Socialism attached. According to Mr. Leacock, anything that is labelled Socialism will not work, even if the label was stuck there by Mr. Leacock himself and even if that very system has proved that it will work. Mr. Leacock has allowed himself to slip into a position which he will have some difficulty in maintaining.

As a matter of fact, this system of State control which Mr. Leacock seems to imagine is Socialism, is actually nothing of the kind. If Mr. Leacock knows anything about the origin, history and function of the "State," he must also know that State control could never solve the economic inequalities which constitute the main objection to the present system but would more likely operate to intensify them. If State control is all that the term Socialism suggests to Professor Leacock, then he has much to learn.

And the reason why it will not work—this thing the professor has mis-called Socialism—is, if you please, because it is based on Altruism and, moreover, a degree of altruism—"of willingness to labor for the good of others,"—"such as the world has never known nor is ever likely to know." Well, for our part, the professor may base his Socialism on any old thing he likes. His Socialism is no concern of ours. But in the matter of Altruism, we must again take issue with our learned friend. If Altruism is indeed a willingness to labor for the good of others, then what of the modern wage-worker? He is not only willing, but anxious, even eager, to labor for others. And he is by no means particular as to what others. Is this Altruism? If it be, then surely there is enough and to spare even to work the professor's next little system. But perhaps if the professor knew more about the nature and origin of Altruism, or if he were disposed to tell the truth about so much as he does know, he might tell his readers that Altruism is nothing more or less than an instinctive reaction to the associative principle—that principle which teaches that the well-being of the individual is dependent upon the well-being of the group. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of men braved hardships, suffering and death during the recent war in response to the urging of that instinct. There was Altruism in abundance and intensity, misdirected it is true, but Altruism nevertheless. Its direction is largely a matter of knowledge. When those same men who fought so valiantly for Capitalism on the fields of France shall realize that the best interests of society demand it, be sure that they will fight against Capitalism with every bit as much ardor.

And who is Professor Leacock that he should attempt to set a limit to the future development and recognition of the associative principle? It is conceivable that a time will come when a pro-

fessor of economics will refuse to misinform the public as to the facts of his science realizing that should he misinform them, the progress of society might be retarded thereby and indirectly he himself would suffer. That would indicate a degree of Altruism to which Professor Leacock has apparently not yet attained.

Mr. Leacock devotes practically the whole of this fifth chapter to a discussion of Socialism as a possible solution to the "Unsolved Riddle." Consequently we might expect to find him advising the fullest investigation of Socialist teachings. To understand modern Socialism—not the dummy Socialism of Mr. Leacock but the real thing—it is necessary, one might almost say essential, to have some knowledge of its historical development from the idealistic Utopian Socialism of the eighteenth century to the Scientific Socialism of today as taught by the Socialist Party of Canada, Socialism which is scientific in the highest and completest sense of the word. We may judge then of how desirous Mr. Leacock really is that his readers shall thoroughly understand the subject he discusses when we find him burgeoning forth with such a gem as this: "We may omit here all discussion of the historical progress of Socialism." Quite so! And forthwith the good professor omits it all, except for the statement that Socialism has become "a purely economic doctrine."

Perhaps, if Mr. Leacock had permitted himself and his readers a review of the historical progress of Socialism he would never have had the temerity to make such a statement as this last which, to place it in its proper category, is utter nonsense. Socialism is not a "purely economic doctrine"—or stay, perhaps Mr. Leacock's Socialism is. As heaven is our witness, the more we read of this chapter five, the less are we able to imagine just what weird business this Socialism of Professor Leacock's is. The only thing we feel sure of in connection with it is that it is like unto no Socialism that we care to have anything to do with.

"There is no need to decide whether the Materialistic Theory of History is true or false," says Mr. Leacock. Here again may be noted a pronounced indisposition on his part to state definitely whether he accepts or denies the Materialistic Interpretation. And perhaps he is wise, for, if he denied it, most certainly every other professor on the continent would be laughing at him, while if, on the other hand, he admitted it he would automatically make hash of his whole argument. Consequently he is compelled to "pussy-foot" around the subject, which he does rather clumsily. Furthermore he asserts that "nine out of every ten Socialists have forgotten or have never heard what the Materialistic Theory of History is." It is doubtful if Mr. Leacock could have made a statement farther removed from the truth than this if he had tried. The Materialistic Interpretation is one of the fundamentals of Scientific Socialism. Every Socialist worthy of the name is quite familiar with it and the average wage-worker in the camps, mines and mills of British Columbia has a far better grasp of it than Mr. Leacock appears to have.

Another of the fundamentals of Scientific Socialism is The Class Struggle. Mr. Leacock adroitly evades it thus: "No need to examine whether human history is or is not a mere record of class exploitation, since the controversy has long shifted to other grounds." Quite correct, professor! The controversy has shifted. But why did you shy at telling your readers that when it shifted it left the theory of The Class Struggle complete victor in full possession of the field? The Capitalist press would hardly be publishing your articles if you had said anything so indiscreet as that, professor. Is it permissible to wonder if that possibility influenced you in any way?

Mr. Leacock then proceeds to review the Socialists "indictment of the manifold weaknesses and obvious injustice of the system under which we live," and admits that the Socialist in this is correct. But it appears that, "He (the Socialist) looks so long that a mist comes before his eyes. He loses sight of the supreme fact that, after all, in its own poor clumsy fashion, the machine does work." We must confess that we were not prepared to hear the Socialist loses sight of the fact that in its own poor clumsy fashion the Capitalist machine does work. This is quite a new one on us. But what if the machine does work? Are we then if our watch, for instance, works clumsily and loses time, to pay no attention to the matter, but be thankful that

it runs at all? What kind of logic is this from a professor? Is Mr. Leacock a fool or does he think his readers are fools that he offers them such argument?

From here on, the remainder of chapter five is devoted to a description of a Utopia which according to Mr. Leacock is the dream of the Socialist. In some peculiar manner it has got all mixed up with State Ownership of the means of production. Mr. Leacock appears to have in mind someone who imagines State Ownership to be Socialism. And therein is the key to the whole chapter five. Mr. Leacock has been doing his utmost to demolish us. But we have emerged unscathed except perhaps for a little weariness at having to wade through so much nonsense.

And the explanation? It is quite simple. The good professor has been hurling his bolts at what he imagines to be the Socialist position. Never was man more cruelly deceived. We were not there. We have not been there for some time. As a matter of fact, we left there nearly one hundred years ago. That is to say, Socialism, about one hundred years ago was something like what Mr. Leacock imagines it to be today. Mr. Leacock is very much behind the times. We are tempted to wonder if he believes Ptolemy's theory of the heavenly bodies represents the science of astronomy. It would be just as logical, just as effective, and every bit as dishonest to attack the science of astronomy because it once taught that the earth was the center of the universe, as to attack Socialism in the manner and on the grounds upon which he is attacking it.

Socialism today is Scientific. It is not founded upon a dream, a vision, a divine discontent, or a speculative belief. It is founded upon such solid rocks as The Materialistic Interpretation of History, The Class Struggle, The Marxian analysis of Capitalist Production, The Principle of Evolution and the Positive Outcome of Philosophy. It does not build castles in the air or plan ideal Utopias but studies social and organic laws and seeks to understand current events by the light of them. It does not advocate revolution. There is no need. The social revolution is almost upon us. Even now its rumblings can be heard at no great distance. Socialism cries aloud to society, "Your house is falling about your ears. It is for you to discover, while there is yet time, the reasons for its downfall so that you may build better next time."

We would recommend to Mr. Leacock a little book entitled "The Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada," and another entitled, "Socialism, Utopian and Scientific." If he will read these he may get a glimmering of what an awful fool he has been making of himself. It may be that he has read them. It is more charitable though to assume that he has not, in which case he is merely foolish to have been led into writing on a subject upon which he is not informed. But if he has read them, he is in the position of a man of some little reputation who has deliberately written for public consumption, upon a subject of vital importance, that which he knows to be untrue.

In any case we are of the opinion that Mr. Leacock might better confine himself to the writing of funny stories. He is more at home there. He is too careless in treatment, too impulsive, and altogether too biased to write on serious subjects.

Next week, we understand, it is Mr. Leacock's intention to discuss Bellamy's "Looking Backward." By which we gather that he intends to set up "Looking Backward" as his dummy representing Socialism for the sheer unhallowed joy of knocking it down again.

We wish Mr. Leacock joy of his task. "Looking Backward," is in many ways a remarkable book. But as a serious contribution to sociological thought it is worthy of just about as much consideration as Mr. Leacock's chapter six is likely to be.

C. K.

FRENCH SOCIALISTS AND RUSSIA.

A resolution strongly condemning interference with Russia (says our Paris correspondent) was passed unanimously by the Conference of French Socialists held on Saturday in preparation for the general election. Alexandre Blanc said: "As a deputy and a candidate at the coming election, I align myself with Lenin and Trotsky and the whole Russian revolution."