

Capitalism

Atlantic in the same latitude was barren unless for the piece irrigated by the Nile. This part was able to accumulate wealth and there arose the Egyptian civilization. Buckle says: "The fertility of the soil exercised most influence in Ancient Societies, but European civilization was influenced more by climatic conditions." Buckle points out the progress made by the invasion of Mongolian and Tartarian barbarians, and in this connection I want to draw attention to what Engel's says in his "Origin of the Family," 188-89-90: "What was the mysterious charm by which the Germans infused a new life into decrepit Europe? Was it an innate magic power of the German race as our jingo historians would have it? By no means. Of course, the Germans were a highly gifted Aryan branch and especially at that time, in full process of vigorous development. They did not however, rejuvenate Europe by these specific national properties, but simply by their barbarism, their gentile institution. This personal efficiency and bravery, their love of liberty, and their democratic instinct, which regarded all public affairs as its own affairs, in short all those properties which the Romans had lost, and which were alone capable of forming new states and raising new nationalities out of the muck of the Roman world—what were they but characteristic marks of the barbarians in the upper stages, fruits of gentile constitution? If they transformed the antique form of monogamy, mitigated the male rule in the family and gave a higher position to women than the classic world had ever known, what enabled them to do so, unless it was their barbarism? If they could safely transmit a trace of the genuine gentile order, the mark communes, to the feudal state of at least three of the most important countries—Germany, North of France and England, and thus give a local coherence and the means of resistance to the oppressed class, the peasants, even under the hardest medieval serfdom, means which neither the slaves of antiquity nor the modern proletariat found ready at hand, to whom did they owe this, unless it was again their barbarism, their exclusively barbarian, mode of settling in gentes? And in conclusion, if they could develop and universally introduce the mild form of servitude which they had been practicing at home, and which more and more displaced slavery, also in the Roman Empire—to whom was it due, unless it was again their barbarism, thanks to which they had not yet arrived at complete slavery, neither in the form of ancient slaves nor in that of the Oriental house slaves? This milder form of servitude, as Fourier first stated, gave to the oppressed the means of their gradual emancipation as a class, and is therefore far superior to slavery." . . . "Antiquity did not know any abolition of slavery by rebellion, but the serfs of the middle ages gradually enforced their liberation as a class. Every vital and productive germ with which the Germans inoculated the Roman world, was due to barbarism. Indeed only barbarians are capable of rejuvenating a world laboring under the death throes of unnerved civilization. And the higher stage of barbarism, to which and in which the Germans worked their way up previous to the migrations, was best calculated to prepare them for the work. That explains everything."

It seems to me the Russian Revolution is an analogy with the above deduction, and the backward Russians with their communistic instincts so strong and their communistic habits, may have given that local coherence and resistance to the oppressed class which, Engles says, "neither the slaves of antiquity nor the modern proletariat found ready at hand." I believe we could transpose Engles and say in regard to the Russians: "Their personal efficiency and bravery, their love for liberty, and their democratic instinct due to their backwardness (barbarism), their commune customs, give them their means of resistance, and again to what was it due unless it was their backwardness, thanks to which they had not arrived at complete wage slavery."

Here is a subject for some one to elaborate on and a point that will raise discussion in the class.

Next Lesson: "Natural Environment" (Continued)

CAPITALISM is a system of commodity production for profit. It is a system which exhibits features that are distinctly different, and develops contradictions that are startling when compared with all previous systems that sprung up and disappeared from human society.

For instance, all that science has been able to do in the development and improvement of this wonderfully intricate machinery of wealth production; all that economy can devise for the elimination of wasted labor; all that education can do to make the workers more adaptable and familiar with all its parts has been done. With the result that commodities are piled up much more rapidly than they can be consumed, demand never keeping pace with the supply, a surplus accumulates awaiting buyers, and the producers (commodities also) are a surplus in the markets, likewise awaiting buyers.

Yet in spite of the immense development and improvement in the productivity of this machine, despite the many labor-saving devices applied to it, the cheese-paring policy of economy in the amount of labor needed for its operation, there is the most stupendous waste, from a worker's point of view, in labor put to the most useless forms of production; an abyssmal ignorance displayed in the repair of a broken exchange system.

Take, for example, the millions of workers throughout the world engaged in the production of nostrums, "cure-alls" for human ills, the thousands of workers burning daylight writing ads., inducing people to buy them.

In the production of a well-known brand of pills three cents pays for the labor and material needed in a box, but twenty-five cents is paid for the selling. From a workers' point of view this is useless, in view of the fact that human ills increase more rapidly than "curicants."

A low standard of living; the production of food-stuffs from decomposing matter; the crowding of the slums and tenements, which slaves are pleased to call homes, the sight of great poverty in one class and greater wealth in another will produce more diseases and anti-social vices than there are doctors and police enough to deal with them, fill more hospitals and prisons than there is room for.

Churches are built and a number of mannikins are selected for the production of states of hypnosis in the people, helped by the spinal thrilling tones of organ; the soft lights and shades of the building, the minds of the people are controlled by these "spellbinders."

But the thoughts, ideas, opinions, and morals of men and women are the product of their environment. The nature of a man's work will determine the nature of his thoughts. And in spite of the multiplicity of churches and schisms, crime and moral depravity grow much faster, become so strong and healthy that a type is bred, immune to religion.

The war proved that a fourth of the world's workers could keep immense armies and navies supplied with food, clothing and munitions, keep a fourth engaged on the production of non-essentials, together with a swarm of useless parasites in luxury and all that makes life, for such a breed, worth living.

But these contradictions in the efficiency and the inefficiency of capitalism are not the only ones.

In 1914, trade between all countries ran along smooth lines, no worries in the world of finance interrupted the even flow of export and import trade. A dollar's worth of commodities in those days purchased a dollar's worth from elsewhere in return. Today, conditions have changed; the "pound sterling," "the franc," and the "mark" have depreciated in value. The manufacturers in these countries are in a dilemma.

The British merchants can not trade with the merchants of the United States with the "pound sterling" quoted (at the time this is written) at \$3.50, when formerly, during 1914, it was worth in New York \$4.87. The British merchants must send more commodities to make up this difference in exchange rates than the merchant class of the States would have to send in return. Aside from the United States and Great Britain, all other countries

are in a similar position. Hence the export trade of all countries has almost stopped. Ships and freight trains are taken off their runs, tied up in ports and running sheds, their crews now members of the unemployed. The deprecia- throws the industrial machine out of gear and almost stops the works.

Capitalism has produced its experts in every trade and science, specialists trained in the university and tried out in the field of experience. And these specialists, men of finance, political economists, are called to a conference with the representatives of capitalism, and there asked for a solution of the problem. As well might capitalism call in some imbecile from the street and ask him to restore the currency once more to its former position. All that these wizards could advise was produce, produce, and save and save. But, acting on this advice, we have produced and saved, and saved, for more than a year. And the pile that has been produced and saved everywhere is higher than Mont Blanc, a mountain of junk, that nobody can buy, so strong has become the habit of thrift throughout the world.

But each part of this beautifully sleek machine is of an extremely delicate nature and so dependent one part upon another. Export trade affects home trade, as the loss of a limb affects all other parts of the body, and a period of unemployment faces the workers of the world such as was never known in history. And capitalism, knowing this, knowing also that it must continue to feed its slaves or perish, prepares for war, the only method by which trade can be produced when all other methods fail. Ominous reports circulate in the press, of war in the East; the United States and Japan will fight as the best means of deciding who shall exploit China. A world war may be the outcome, and the slave class can prepare itself for the shambles. Or it can prepare to participate in a struggle for the ownership of the means of life. R.K.

SAN FRANCISCO WORKERS OPEN NIGHT SCHOOL

(From "The Rank and File," Frisco)

It may be late in the year for school to open, but "it is better late than never." At least that is the idea which actuates the men and women who are determined that the workers in the bay district shall have a school of their own.

Such a school is no longer a possibility; it is a reality. It opened its doors last night at 566 Fulton street, San Francisco, and a large and enthusiastic class was enrolled. Those who desire to attend the school and were not able to be present at the preliminary meeting should be present next Tuesday night, when actual instruction will commence.

Class in Economics.

The school is starting with one class, and the subject which will be taught is the most vital one for Labor to study, namely economics. The object of the class is to draw young men and women in the labor movement together to study in order to gain an understanding of society as it exists today. The school is strictly Marxian, and will be conducted on the same lines as Karl Marx conducted his school in London. Tuition will be free. All contributions will be purely voluntary and a student will give only if he can afford to.

One of the many novel features of the school will be the low charge which will be made for text books. No book will cost over twenty cents, and only one book at a time will be studied.

McDonald to Teach.

The school is fortunate in securing Jack McDonald for its teacher. McDonald was formerly active in the labor movement in Canada, and has often contributed to the "Western Clarion," which is the official organ of the Socialist Party of Canada. McDonald taught with marked success a class in Industrial History at the People's Institute of this city.