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Editor.....Ewen MacLeod

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A REVIVAL OF LEARNING?

AT the present time in socialist circles, and especially socialist study circles, there is prevalent something of a tendency toward reconsideration of the concept of social change as agreed upon in the light of socialist understanding, and it is the pleasant duty of the Clarion to welcome the spirit of serious enquiry in such matters. Events, as they have transpired in the world at large in recent years, have given impetus in the general mind toward broader enquiry into social relationships, all of which, no doubt, has a tendency toward a comprehension by society at large of the nature of the troubles that beset it as a social order. In this process of recurring events, ideas change in unexpected places. If the events are weighty enough to upset the smooth running of the social machine, then the machine runs somewhat out of gear and ideas are subject to change accordingly. If events move rapidly, ideas are the more likely to come quickly under amendment, and this applies to all who are affected—even to the socialists.

There can be no doubt that the present world of socialists has been provided with enough material, since 1914 to date, to encourage unrest in all avenues of settled opinion. This has been apparent enough, as the present unsettled condition of the various socialist schools of thought bears witness, to say nothing of the dismemberment of the several sections of the movement in general. All parties are or have been affected, including our own.

The past few years have occupied the socialist movement—we are using the term broadly—in internal strife, mainly over policies and tactics to be considered as means toward an end, and even there almost all parties in dispute have betrayed sufficient inconsistency to encourage enquiry into method, as method is applied in the socialist world of thought. The Socialist mind has been seriously disturbed into analysing its own aims and objects, its manner of approach toward their attainment, its immediate possibilities and limitations and the weight and influence of the forces that bear upon its progress. In all this there is a tendency to go back to the books and see if there has been anything taken for granted over-hastily; to see if the socialist case is sound or if it has been properly considered and understood, or if its outline needs extension.

Happily, the S. P. of C. mind is not immune from disturbance. We say this in full view of any who may think us overly well satisfied with ourselves or who are ill enough acquainted with us to think we are devoted to constancy for its own sake, or as an everlasting creed. We sense a sort of "revival of learning" in our own ranks and we are glad to see it. It appears in a questioning attitude, manifesting inquiry into the doctrine of the class struggle, the limitations of the materialist interpretation of history, the revolutionary concept of sudden social change, the socialist point of view, and so forth and so on, all to be confirmed, amended or recast. All well and good.

Now there should be usefulness in the serious discussion of such matters and it is unlikely that discussion is all confined to one area. If it is not prevalent throughout the country then it should be broadcasted through the Clarion columns so that

it may reach all corners. If it already prevails throughout the country then the Clarion columns should be the medium wherein the various points of view are set forth to be exchanged all around.

So to begin with we ask for whatever may come along of interest in these matters. It is to be supposed that from interesting discussion there should come interesting manuscript. There will be those, of course, who will excuse themselves under the plea that they can't write or they can't spell. They will be the critics. Let's have the argument, spelled ill or well.

A word as to space. Space, we suppose, will accord with the readers' likelihood of sustaining interest in the subjects discussed, or of our own judgment under the circumstances. We are not disposed to welcome overlengthy manuscript. We trust to the writers' appreciation of our limited size, and of the fact that in a bi-monthly journal interest on one topic under discussion is hard to sustain for very long. Our remarks above, hastily recorded and in which we have scarcely had time to dot the I's and cross the T's need not at all serve as a pattern, either in subject matter or in presentation. It appears that there is a tendency to reconsider everything, the S. P. of C.'s viewpoint included. Very good. Write it down.

COMMERCIAL "DEVELOPMENT."

SOME time ago I read in a commercial horticultural paper an article dealing with the enactment of laws for the protection of certain species of Polypodium and some climbing ferns, to prevent their eradication by commercialisation. Those natural greens were valuable to the trade for us in table and wedding decorations, as well as other floral work, and therefore eagerly bought up when offered for sale. With a growing demand, prices stiffened. Higher prices caused a more active search for the plants. Nobody thought of replanting them. They decreased in number. The supply fell off, prices rose on account of this and at last those gems of Nature were threatened with extinction. An insignificant fact, you will say. It may be; but not so if viewed from the viewpoint of the economist, not to mention the lover of nature or the artist. It shows too plainly the ultimate result of commercial development of the natural resources. If there would have been no profit in gathering those plants they would have been left undisturbed, a source of joy and pleasure to scientists, artists and lovers of nature for generations to come. The loss of dollars and cents cannot express this; the damage done is irreparable, a heavy price to pay for greed of profit, for commercial "development."

Another instance: When I worked in London, a Hindoo somewhere in the Himalayas discovered a spot where *Lypridium Faivisanum* grew plentifully. The plant was not one of the most beautiful lady-slippers, but extremely rare and valuable for breeding purposes, I mean the production of new and improved varieties of *Lypridium*. My employers paid a good price for them and got eventually more than they wanted in this deal. The plants had sold before discovery of this new habitat for several guineas and could be bought, when I worked in Chelsea, for about 2s and 6d. If the Hindoo would have sold them in the open market prices would have dropped to zero. So "our firm" had to buy them to prevent this. Our friend in the Himalayas made good money out of this but in time he was able to kill the goose, that laid the golden egg,—to eradicate the plant. If there would have been no profit in it, he would not have "developed" the natural resources of the Himalayas, the *Lypridium* would yet beautify the valley in which it was found.

I promise not to make this entirely a lecture on gardening, arts and similar matters of lofty ideals; but before proceeding to more practical matters I would like to point out a few other facts that have to deal with commercial "development" in gardening. The rose was originally grown on account of its perfume. In fact most people associate roses with the sense of satisfaction to their olfactory organs. But take the modern rose. Where is its smell? We florists have developed the form and size of the rose and to that have sacrificed its

smell. Furthermore we have weakened its vitality. We have developed it commercially with a view to profit, to profit alone. Take fruit trees. We have developed their bearing capacity to such an extent that their vitality has been seriously weakened and they fall much easier victims to insect pests and diseases than formerly—again commercial development, production to sell, production for profit.

All this might appear far-fetched and trivial to the casual observer, and for this reason I will come closer home and illustrate commercial "development" with matters familiar to most Canadians. A short time ago a howl of rage was going through the press about the way the wicked Jap was exploiting Cascara bark and exhausting local natural supplies of it. He was only doing the same thing our lumber barons are doing to the cedar forests, the pulp trees and other timber limits. He was commercially "developing" the natural resources of the country. He was exploiting them, without regard to posterity, because it was profitable for him to do so.

Of late the world has been crazy with oil fever. If one can believe the papers the countries with oil deposits will be tremendously benefited by the commercial "development" of the natural resources. Their "development" meant to Mexico only political revolutions and civil strife. At last salvation seems to make its appearance there and with the giving out of the oil, let us hope, Mexico—will be left alone without enjoying the blessings of "commercial development" and civilization.

What commercial "development" did to the Buffalo is too well known to need special mention. Within a very short time a valuable supply of food, the chief sustenance of the Indian before the advent of the white man, disappeared from this continent. People are trying to replace them with cattle, but it will be a long time before a strain of cattle is raised that is so adapted to withstand the rigors of the climate of the prairies, as the late lamented Buffalo was. Only another victim of merciless exploitation for profit, or as our chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade like to call it, "commercial development of the fur and meat trade."

On the Pribiloff islands, off the coast of Alaska, is the home of fur seals. They have been the cause of considerable friction between Canada, England, Japan, Norway, the United States and other nations, for capitalist groups in all of those countries wanted to "develop" the commercial assets that those seals carried along with them. There was just as intense rivalry between those groups of capitalists to get the hides of those animals as there is about the energy contained in the hides of cheap labour. Their commercial "development" meant profits to the capitalist. It meant considerable discomfort and threatened ultimate destruction to the seals.

Let me conclude with a few remarks concerning the B. C. fisheries. When the white man came to this coast, salmon was plentiful in the streams and rivers of this country.

At the bottom of the present "scarcity" lies commercial exploitation, greed for profit or "commercial development" of the natural resources, as our merchant princes would say. The fisherman is not to be blamed for the destruction wrought; it is the damnable system of production for profit, "commercial development" of natural resources.

From press reports it seems that my remarks regarding the salmon hold good for halibut too. Clam beds have vanished through exploitation for profit and crabs and lobsters will without doubt be eliminated on account of the same causes.

This destruction of the means of human subsistence will have to cease. Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade and other agencies advocating this "development of natural resources" will have to be eliminated. It is up to the worker to do this, to replace production for profit with production for use, or he will be eliminated himself.

H. KERSTEN.

Note: In our last issue the article "Emigration, from various angles," should have borne the name of H. Kersten.—(Ed.)