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Of Matter of Fact

By J. HARRINGTON

AS the only conceivable form of perfection I am acquainted with is a perfect nuisance, I am free to don sack-cloth and ashes and murmur, "I have sinned." But in undertaking to

contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,"
let us stay with the facts.

This may seem a reasonable request, but it is evidently an impossible one. The primal curse is, was, and ever shall be—thou shalt kid thyself.

We are quite prepared to answer for our sins, and they are legion, both of commission and omission, but—sufficient into the docket be the ones we are guilty of.

J. A. McD. tenders some advice in the Clarion of Jan. 2nd which indicates that someone has been pulling his leg, or else he has squandered his time listening to some of the few consummate hypocrites whom we managed to get rid of years ago, over the twenty-one-point jumble, and who have been acting like hysterical kids ever since. It would be good news (and positively true) for him to learn that "linen and coats" arise in the economic classes only when they appear in the text, and "that the application of Marxian economies to social issues and problems" was always insisted on, by one of the most thorough students and competent teachers of the subject on this continent at least. Neither, and this by the way, did he confine himself to Marx, but brought a wealth of information relative to those modern economists who toil mightily in the interests of Salesmanship, when they are not specifically employed tearing at the Marxian analysis because of its disturbing tendencies (their own language) among the inefficient. He will be equally glad to know that the associates and country of Meronic and Caelo have never been mentioned in propaganda meetings, which is nothing to boast about, because a comprehensive understanding of historical materialism is hardly possible without a knowledge of what occurred between the collapse of ancient slave economy and modern wage economy; between machineless and machine civilization. The society which bridged these periods was almost entirely at the mercy of material conditions, and should be dealt with much oftener than it has been in classes, and certainly in propaganda meetings.

I did devote one talk to the Peruvian revolutions of conquistadore days, for the purpose of demonstrating that the majority of mankind do not care who governs them so long as they are free to follow their own paths of comfort. And that they have a deep rooted antagonism to any altering or encumbering of those paths, and will invariably support the old government, if at all tolerable, against the new, no matter what prospects it might proffer.

I might have chosen Florence, Milan or Bruges of the 13th century, Vienna, Paris or Berlin of the 19th—or a score of others. Peru, however, offered conditions well suited for an analysis, from which disturbing elements were absent, much as a vacuum offers in physics. The actors were as remote from the seat of authority as though they had been on another planet, almost; they were men for whom battle, murder and sudden death held no terrors; they had an extraordinarily well developed ego. They had great material advantages to safeguard, yet they surrendered without a struggle to the de-

putised authority of one man. Since that talk of some years ago, Peru has never been mentioned, which is another sin of omission. Some of the above mentioned hypocrites chucked a dummy on that occasion and, perhaps the enormity of my offence still lingering, they stick their piece of soap under the tongue and kick their heels on the cold and unsympathetic cobble-stones of Kearney Street (is it still cobbled?); if so Me. would be well advised to leave them in their tantrum.

As for the advice about making clear the struggle between the capitalist class and the proletariat at propaganada meetings, we always have and always will practice that. In fact, personally, I never speak on any subject without making it plain, or trying to, that the capitalist class, as a class, is worthy of that enormous contempt which the slave for some incomprehensible reason harbours for the slave who won't work. And if I happen to be talking on the, say—"Economic bearing on gas engines of Hannibal's failure to reduce Rome," I always make an opening for the remark that a capitalist idler is just sixty degrees below (into the bulb) the cur that beats the widow out of his board bill and decamps with the kiddies' penny bank, and should be treated accordingly.

Carthage must be destroyed. Something like that. And yet it is not conducive to successful meetings. Why?

Let us look at the facts. They may not be as noticeable as a cyclone, but they are sufficiently obvious to render Pickwickian excursions into philosophical bogs superfluous.

"C" says we are dying from the very thing that J. A. McD. claims will give us life.

Let's take a look-see. Go to Winnipeg, once a flourishing centre of propaganda. There you find S. P. of C. graduates, in various groups, O. B. U., W. P., S. L. P., F. L. P. and maybe other abbreviations, hurling epithets, expletives, jibes and sneers upon each other's revolutionary heads, with a venom and hatred they never exhibited toward the capitalist class. The same may be said of any town on this continent almost. Swift's imaginary brothers in the "Tale of a Tub" were hardly less bitter in invective, the public utterances of our modern brothers lacking perhaps, though the private remarks do not, "the imagery of the charnel house and the dung-hill."

Let anyone arise to address these faithful on the subject of the class struggle. What he says never registers. If they go to hear him it is to sneer, to question about the 1st, 2nd, 3rd International, the Besco, or such other matters which are related to the class struggle much as the cat to the tiger, Fit to watch a mouse hole, not to range the forest. No knowledge, nor wit, nor wisdom of his could charm them. He is yellow, renegade, Kautskian, or (God that I should have lived to see the day) Trotskian. This is regrettable but quite human, and need not alarm us, for when the working millions chance to move they will pay no more attention to such chatter than their masters do now. Or if they do, it will be to turn aside momentarily and clout some sense of proportion into their bewildered heads.

On top of this essentially practical state of affairs we have had several strikes, which further widen the breach. Not dialectical errors, nor philoso-

phical heresies, nor political renegeing, but the working out of every day matters in working class lines are responsible for the chaos in the labor movement today. And, coming so soon after the evidence presented during the discussion on Value, in the Clarion, it is something awful to find sentiments expressed which strongly suggest that the Marxian rule has suffered a complete reversal—not in the material conditions but in his mind must be sought the motive forces of man's behavior.

Today in Vancouver it is practically impossible to make meetings pay their way. And even if this were not the case, so far as the Party is concerned, we have not got one speaker available who would attract more than a handful of the faithful, putting aside the matter of expenses. Nor are the other groups much better off; perhaps they have more of the faithful, perhaps one speaker. There have been four meetings here on a Sunday night and the four of them would not make half of our regular Sunday night meetings of five years ago.

No Party can expand without a generous sprinkling of youngsters, and we have had no young blood for years. Our possible recruits are ambitious for super-sixes, or super heterodynes, and by day or night eat up space, on the King's highway or in God's own heaven.

Value, Price and Profit appear to interest them only from a practical point of view; they certainly conceal any interest they may have in their theoretical aspect. We do not, therefor, cleave to the Labor Party because they are stronger, for they are in the same sad plight as ourselves, but to make possible the chance of making a noise at all, at all.

Now here we have to consider another angle. The I.W.W., which befo' the wa' could not muster a dozen in this town, can now fill a fairly large hall on a Saturday night, say five or six hundred, a very large percentage of whom are youngsters, and this same organization is always asking us to send them speakers and teachers in economics, and, herein lies our chief and unpardonable crime. We are unable to comply. Well befo' the wa' to have even contemplated sending a speaker to an I. W. W. meeting, "except in opposition," would have been considered equal to a good catholic ejecting his quid into the chalice. Considering to what length explanation of our decline has already proceeded I have but small-desire to add my sum of little to that which hath too much. But the I. W. W. owes something of this popularity to its complete acceptance of that human failing (?) well known to Pope Gregory, John Calvin, Oliver Cromwell, Abraham Lincoln, General Booth, Mahon Abrams, Lobengula, and one or two others, that the human animal dearly loves to sing in unison. They have also, of course, justified their existence by maintaining a centre of resistance, when most other trade unions have been utterly routed. But the fact remains, that they offer an atmosphere more human and congenial than any we have ever maintained.

But, seems to me that I'll cut for this time, or else commit the "damnable error" of "C" and "R". And anyway, dealing with facts is a wearisome business, as all true philosophers know.

Not with entire stupidity did the schoolboy write "Philosophy increases thirty-two feet per second."