

WESTERN CLARION

A Journal of
CURRENT
EVENTS

Official Organ of
THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

HISTORY
ECONOMICS
PHILOSOPHY

No. 869

Twice a Month

VANCOUVER, B. C., JUNE 16, 1922.

FIVE CENTS

"Burn Your Books?"

BY F. CUSACK

They tax our policy and call it cowardice.
Count wisdom as no member of the war.
Forstall prescience, and esteem no act
But that of hand; the still and mental parts
That do contrive how many hands shall strike
When fitness calls them on, and know by measure
Of their observant toll the enemy's weight,
Why this hath not a finger's dignity,
They call this bed-work, mappery, closet-war!
(Troilus and Cressida)

THE U. S. A. and Canada—the sparsely populated territory north of the forty-ninth parallel—constitute, from the Socialist point of view, one politico-economic unit of Capitalist society, notwithstanding that the southern breezes flutter the Stars and Stripes while in the northern wind it is the Union Jack that waves, and the Dominion—as the world has been informed—has attained its majority and has become a nation.

That Canada is economically swayed by American capitalism is a matter of record and the consequent political ascendancy of the U. S. in Canadian affairs is made very clear when we find the Canadian workers engaged in any serious dispute with their masters. Witness Morgan's trip to Ottawa during the Winnipeg strike, the concentration of troops at strategic points along the International line, or the truly American deportation law passed in forty-five minutes (or was it less?) by the Canadian Parliament in 1919.

From these considerations it naturally follows that any tactics drawn up for the guidance of the class-conscious workers in Canada, must be based primarily upon the situation in the U. S. A., since that situation is the completest known development and the outcome of conditions identical with Canadian conditions, although as yet the conditions here are not so well matured; the traditions of the British proletariat modifying in some measure the Canadian workers' ideology.

The two countries present to the student of sociology and economics a case of what may be termed lop-sided development, the social consciousness and political understanding of the workers lagging far behind the remarkable industrial development of the system with which their lives are bound up. Side by side with the most gigantic and intricate machinery of wealth production and the most advanced technical processes we have a working-class mentally "behind the times," possessed of an emotional idealism manifesting itself in race hatred and religious revivalism, red raids and lynching bonfires, ouija-board fetchism or Christian Science, and the most pathetic loyalty in the world to the orders in which they are oddfellows, foresters and knights, or the menageries in which they figure as moose, elks, goblin or what-not, parading in grotesque regalia, participating in ludicrous rites, presumably satisfying the primitive instincts of the untutored barbarians from whom they derive.

If the case for savage survivals required confirmation—here it is.

Mencken describes the "Boobeoisie" as "Knights of Pythias, readers of the 'Saturday Evening Post,' members of the Y. M. C. A., Weepers at Chautauquas, Wearers of Badges, Children of God," etc.

Permeating the mass of native born residents of "these States" is the belief that they are fortunate

above all other people in their possession of constitutional rights, democratic institutions, etc. The whole country is tarred with the same brush, exhibits the same childishness, the same crudity of belief, the same ignorance of social phenomena, the same unconsciousness of working-class requirements. As for any latent revolutionary intent, it is nowhere among this dense mass discernible, and not the most optimistic actionist of them all, looking squarely on the American scene can detect such a thing. Inveterately romantic though some of them are, we know, when they tell us of the revolutionary ferment south of forty-nine, or north of it, that they are gazing on the scene from an eminence in Central Europe. The psychology prevalent among the working-class is, to put it mildly, non-revolutionary, and such as it is, in attempting to intensify it in the interest of the capitalist class, sensational methods are befittingly adopted. Huge posters assure us of the prosperity round the corner, like "the pie in the sky"; educationalists invent idiotic slogans: "Buy your own home," "Do it now," "This is your country," etc., while the national newspapers, edited by journalistic Micawbers with an unerring instinct for "all news that's fit to print," announce in flaming headlines that something is going to "turn up" soon, any delay being due to wages being still too high or to the workers having grown lazy with luxury, or both, propaganda which thousands of workers are only too anxious to swallow because it fits in with their property concepts.

Stunt advertising coupled with that peculiarly American product, Jazz music, is deemed essential to the instant reaching of the masses, either by those having wares to sell (especially if they are doubtful bargains, when we must be "inspired" to purchase) or by those whose mission it is to rouse emotion or create a sentiment. Jazz music is composed by professional syncopaters who thrive by indecently conspiring odds and ends of notes from the classic or standard musicians, from Palestrina to Scriabina, and jumble them together with the slap-stick buck and wing ebullitions of modern vaudeville, and the croonings of the African or Alabama jungles or the superstitious voodoo dance.

This contradiction, between the high industrial development of the U. S. and the low cultural development of the American workers, can best be explained by the fact that on this continent, once the land of opportunity where it was possible for energetic workers to escape from wage slavery owing to the existence of free lands and other natural resources, or by setting up in business, the chances of doing which in a rapidly growing country were many,—on this continent the traditions of the pioneer days, long past, dominate the minds of the workers even yet.

Evidence is not wanting that certain organizations of the working-class, regenerated by the "new tactics" and out to get "the goods," have adopted the stunt-Jazz method of drumming up an audience. A short time ago one of our prairie towns, where the churches every Sunday are comfortably filled by bourgeois-minded proletarians,—Mencken's "boobeoisie," who consider the unemployed a nuisance and the municipal support of them out of taxes assessed on decent citizens' lots and shacks a criminal

folly—received a visit from one of the advertising agents of the newest of these liberating organizations, the latest thing in saviours, owning the sole rights in the holy oil of emancipation guaranteed to cure the economic ills of the workers. To attract the necessary customers to the stall, and to enlist their sympathy once they were gathered round, there was a musical introduction featuring the rumbling of the revolutionary drum, the shrilling of the reformist piccolo, the bombilation of the insurrectionary trombone, the plaintive twanging of the palliative harp and the patter of the modern Messiah, introducing all the up-to-date catchwords: "Revolutionary tempo," "Doctrinaire Socialist," "Communist duty," "Concrete action," "The putsch," "Realms of reality," and many others.

After this performance, conducted by the advertising agent mentioned—a recent graduate of some Eastern school of "action"—the doctor proceeded to diagnose the ills of the workers, and to propose the remedy. The continued existence of wage-slavery in Canada, according to the representative of the new "reelist" school is due, mainly, to the woeful ignorance and lamentable inability ('truth!) of the local practitioners of the healing science, leading from the western seminary (S. P. of C.), relying, poor fools, on a regimen of education instead of, as their Eastern brethren did, prescribing the sovereign prophylactic, "action." "Action," you know, speaks louder than words. "By their deeds ye shall know them." The educationalists are of the opinion that the disease from which the plugs are to be delivered is of a cerebral nature, while the actionists, the wise men of the East—represented by our advance agent—hold strongly to the view that it is a matter of guts, or lack of guts rather, in which case the measures to be taken must be of a surgical character. The operation, however, is not to be performed immediately, the patients requiring to be properly anaesthetized with soup and slogans for the space, generally speaking, of two years, after which they should be in a fit condition for the operation.

During a lull in the barnstorming some of the despised educationists who were present ventured to belittle the Toronto diagnosis and to suggest that it was based upon a hypothesis that was untenable from the start. This was too much. No human equanimity could very well support with unruffled composure such an unmerited or foolish suggestion. These venturesome members of the S. P. of C. were promptly advised that they were "out of touch with the masses"; being dead already it was sheer obstinacy on their part to pretend that they were still alive.

Some of the new converts who showed signs of weakening were consoled by the prophet from the East, who told them that in the "Harrington Academy" there were only fifty students left, and that what the workers wanted was not education—which they got anyway—but action. The "dead ones," however, persisted in pointing to symptoms exhibited by the workers, tending to prove that the Western graduates were not altogether wrong when they maintained that what the workers most suffered from was Capitalist Ideology and hallucinations concerning property, and pointed out further that it

(Continued on page 7)