

Western Clarion

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and Current Events.

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CLARION MAIL BAG.

CLARION Mail Bag enthusiasts will be sorry to learn that Comrade Earp is sick. He is a patient at St. Paul's Hospital, Vancouver (Ward 411. A visitor now and then will find ward 411 the most cheerful corner of the gloom house). At first we thought he had surrendered before the onrush of a possible avalanche of finance in view of his constant encouragement to Mail Bag correspondents, but his trouble is of another order. Francis (Lord) Bacon used to say that "Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man." Comrade Earp adds, "and overwork maketh a tired man, a weary man and, at times a sick man." All hands will join with us in hopes of a quick recovery.

Following the practice established by Com. Earp we open the Mail Bag in the Maritime country and first we come upon M. Goudie, St. John, N. B. This man Goudie is one who earns his living by making queer noises on a violin. Such time as he has on hand after piloting the young folks up and down the scale, he entices friends and acquaintances into his parlor and performs to the tune of the Clarion Maintenance Fund and, as Mail Bag readers well know, with happy result. This time, in the name of the St. John comrades, he sends \$11.25 to the C. M. F.

If Sam. Gompers, Tom Moore and Co. could read what C. Woolings, Georgetown, Ont. thinks of them and their habitual practices, they would (we hope) encounter restless nights. Comrade Woolings was a member of Local Victoria in 1911 and now lives in the land of the Presbytery. Without a doubt the labor leaders need criticism and, sometimes, denunciation. Comrade Woolings will remember, though, that they cannot be worse than the system that breeds them, and working class innocence, somehow or other, manages to tolerate that. Ten cent meal ticket aspirants are sure to generate wherever the misery of wage-labor may be fastened upon, and very often they are somewhat over-anxious. But it will hardly do to let them monopolize all the power of our attack, as Comrade Woolings would like to have it.

Our old friend "Progress" sends us the text of the address of Mr. Colin H. Brunell, President of the United Farmers of Manitoba, an address made at their 20th annual convention. The Manitoba Farmers have over 500 Locals, over 100 Women's sections and more than 15,000 members. They have 23 rural representatives in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly and 12 in the House of Commons. The President says: "We must be careful lest we come to regard our political activities as the main function of our Association, and politics as the panacea for all our ills." It is, no doubt, very natural that the farmers should manifest more understanding of their own efforts toward organization as producers and marketers of general farm produce and grain than of their political ventures, these latter being still somewhat in their infancy, and the former rather a continuous emphasis of cruel experience. Time has not yet yielded to the farmers the full measure of political understanding, but the facts of their experience as producers are recognized by them at once. These facts tend to modify somewhat the first enthusiasm of their early political successes,

and to evoke a further study and reconsideration of the case. President Brunell says:

"There are at the present time more farmers in Canada in financial difficulties than at any time in our history." The purchasing power of farm produce comes in for special mention. Mr. Brunell quotes a neighboring farmer, thus: "Fifty bushels of wheat paid my taxes four years ago, but it took 235 bushels to pay them this year." And: "The farmer who on November 1st 1919 went to pay a \$100 obligation required 38 bushels of No. 1 Northern wheat On November 1st 1922 he would require 95 bushels to pay \$100. If he paid it with oats he required 117 bushels 2 C. W. in 1919, and 218 bushels in 1922; 67 bushels of barley in 1919 and 190 bushels in 1922. If he was a mixed farmer he could meet his \$100 obligation by selling a 952 lb. best butcher steer, four years ago. This last November his steer would have to weigh 1,818 lbs. If he sold hogs, 654 lbs. of selects would pay the bill in 1919, but it would take 1,025 lbs. to do the trick in 1922."

There are the farmer's worries all in a nutshell, and when we add interest on loans, taxation and operation expenses, we account for his present misery. The farmer, beast of burden that he is, tries to offset this—in face of a climbing pile of farm produce now unsold—by MORE WORK. The President says: "Many farmers are using the most up-to-date machinery, driving six and eight-horse teams where they used to drive four, and working 16 hours where they used to work 12." They will continue to spend their time worrying about tariffs, freight rates, cooperative buying and marketing, eliminating the commission man, the jobber, examining double taxation—taxation to the manufacturer and to the government—cooperative banking, all in trying to keep ahead of a dollar bill. They are bound to do this until they find they have a problem in common with all producers, and here is the opportunity for every socialist educator to share his knowledge with those on the land who need it. Every socialist is, or should be, a propagandist.

Comrade John Glendenning, of Winnipeg, writes a long letter concerning the S. P. of C. Local there and the O. B. U. He says the officials of the O. B. U. assert that all Locals of the S. P. of C., excepting Winnipeg Local, support the position of the O. B. U.

Now there is apparently considerable friction existing in Winnipeg over the functions of organizations, industrial and political, and we cannot regard the O. B. U., nor for that matter the A. F. of L., as a rival organization to the S. P. of C. They (the O. B. U. and the A. F. of L.) are rather to be considered as rivals of one another, each functioning primarily in the day-to-day operations of industrial life. They may—and they do—attract people who take advantage of such opportunities as may offer to promote various educational policies, good, bad and indifferent, for working class advancement. There follows from this endless argument as to the respective merits of industrial organizations, craft union and otherwise, as agencies of working class emancipation, sometimes to be considered as agencies working to the exclusion of all others. Well now it is apparent, as a roll-call of general trade union membership will testify, that membership in these organizations is conditioned by the job, and the magnitude of that membership is conditioned by the state of the job market. Such disputes as arise between, let us say, the O. B. U. and the A. F. of L. arise, in the main, over that essential feature of any and all industrial unions as necessary to the maintenance of a dues-paying membership—the matter of functioning, as a union, in the job areas. There attaches itself, of course, to the various organizations, in greater or less degree something of class understanding and class propaganda, and a measure also of class loyalty, but no union can live wholly on that, as unions now are. The rival merits of one form of industrial organization as against another are tested according to their several capacities to meet the needs of wage workers organized in industry, according to the nature of the industry, whether it be operated by skilled or unskilled labor or by labor that is seasonal, migratory, and so forth. For instance, it can-

not be denied that the I. W. W. have succeeded in organizing thousands of men in industry that the A. F. of L. have left untouched. That form of combination, it would seem, appears to meet the organizational wants imposed upon wage workers engaged in certain avenues of employment. Functioning as trade unions is the test imposed upon all forms of trade unions, in spite of some considerable palaver which, at times, would have us consider the I. W. W. man as a sort of biological entity all by himself. It is a fact worth noting also that those occupations which feature a lack of skill, or which do not entail a long apprenticeship, generally promote and foster the growth of organizations committed to policies more radical than those organizations based on craft affiliations find to be acceptable. The unions of what, for convenience, we may call unskilled workers, generally adopt the most highly sounding titles and the farthest flung policies. The craft unions having, or supposing themselves to have something to conserve, are not so susceptible to radical innovations. As to politics, such time as the growth or work of trade union organization is confronted by the structure of the state or the framework of the law, to the hindrance of union activities in any way, the members' attention is diverted to the field of politics necessarily, with direct concern as to the possibilities of success in labor organization. An examination of trade union history will bear this out.

Now this, we hope it will be recognized, is not intended to nourish any feeling of ill-will among the folk who are loyal to their organizations and who see in them useful avenues toward working class enlightenment. The individual wage worker can hardly be said to choose his organization. Rather, it may be said, the nature of the industry favors given forms of industrial organization, and these in turn largely govern the actions of and attract to themselves their adherents. The quarrel between the A. F. of L. and the O. B. U. in Canada is a quarrel over their respective merits as industrial organizations of wage workers. If they succeed in functioning in that way they stay. If they don't they die. Yet one may thrive where the other cannot. No doubt in the present quarrel the disputants are more familiar with the accumulated details of the matter than we are. At any rate, as far as concerns our work as socialists we should very much like to see the back-yard battles, where everybody is a general in strategy and there are never any casualties, come to an end. Yet it takes time (and we are fully aware of it) to wear off the ragged edges from working class differences of opinion and, perhaps, to forget the circumstances in which have been lodged violated pledges and questionable practices which, too, are undoubtedly contributory factors in present time prevailing disputes.

Comrade Ashton of Winnipeg writes a friendly criticism of Com. Stephenson's statement of the Soviet case and an appreciation of MacPherson's "Farmer's Misery." A. Jankoff and J. M. Sanderson each send a sub. Sandy has or had gripe or something. He gets no sympathy from us, for he was consumed with merriment when we had it.

Fred Wood, Morgan Cassin and L. B. LaMarche all send subs. from Sask. La Marche asks Bob. Power to write to him; address Anglia, Sask. P. J. Hunt and Geo. Ronald send subs. from Fiske. Ronald says the farmers mostly interested in our propaganda are those in the direst straits. We're the last hope, apparently.

Geo. Donaldson of Local 110, of the S. P. of C. Stanmore, Alberta, writes of his work and that of the comrades in the neighborhood. Their meetings are well attended, particularly since Lestor's visit, by members of the United Farmers. Likewise comrade George Paton. He finds that the farmers around Delburne are the more perplexed the more they work. The schools are being closed through lack of funds, the municipalities in the agricultural areas are in financial straits and even the bankers are worrying about the chances of recovery. Comrade Exelby, secretary, Alta. P. E. C. (succeeding Com. R. Burns) sends for 1000 leaflets containing the article "Where Are We At?" for distribution. Comrade T. A. Lessey sends a well formulated let-