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The Breeding Ground of Compromise

THE study of economics has always been decried as the "dismal science," and it is very strange that capitalist thinkers should have encouraged this particular notion regarding the "science of wealth." One would think such a science was particularly interesting, and as a matter of fact Marx did make it interesting, especially for the working class. In fact, we could modestly refer the wisecracks of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association to this much maligned economist for information as to their growing desire for Foreign Trade, and the relation it bears to their rate of profit as outlined in chapter iv. of Volume iii. "Capital." However, we are not so interested in their education as in that of the workers.

We will, therefore, preface this article with a quotation from Karl Marx's third volume of "Capital" for consideration of the reader, and those sufficiently interested may refer to the analysis that precedes the conclusions arrived at by Marx.

"On the other hand, every particular sphere of capital, and every individual capitalist has the same interest in the productivity of the social labor employed by the total capital. For two things depend on this productivity. In the first place the mass of use values by which the average profit is expressed; and this is doubly important, where this average profit serves as a fund for the accumulation of new capital, and as a fund for revenue to be spent in enjoyment. In the second place, the amount of the total capital invested (constant and variable), which, with a given amount of surplus value, or profit for the whole capitalist class, determines the rate of profit or the profit on a certain percentage of capital. The special productivity of labor in any particular sphere, or in any individual business of this sphere, interests only those capitalists who are directly engaged in it, since it enables that particular sphere, or that individual capitalist, to make an extra profit over that of the total capital.

"Here, then, we have the mathematically exact demonstration, how it is that the capitalists form a veritable freemason society arrayed against the whole working class, however much they may treat each other as false brothers in the competition among themselves." (Kerr edition, p. 233.)

The slogan of "Greater Production" may appear more intelligible after a careful digesting of the above.

"Even in cases where a man without wealth receives credit in his capacity as an industrial or merchant, it is done for the confident expectation, that he will perform the function of a capitalist and appropriate some unpaid labor with the borrowed capital. He receives credit in his capacity as a potential capitalist. This circumstance, that a man without wealth, but with energy, solidity, ability and business sense may become a capitalist in this way, is very much admired by the apologists of the capitalist mode of production. Although this circumstance continually brings an unwelcome number of new soldiers of fortune into the field and into competition with the already existing individual capitalists, it also secures the supremacy of capital itself, expands its basis, and enables it to recruit ever new forces for itself out of the lower layers of society. In a similar way the circumstance, that the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages formed its hierarchy out of the best brains of people without regard to estate, birth or wealth, was one of the principal means of fortifying priest rule and suppressing the laity. The more a ruling class is able to assimilate the most prominent men of a ruled class, the more solid and dangerous is its rule." (Kerr edition, p. 765).

The last paragraph of the first quotation is worthy of particular consideration by those interested in the political movement of the working class. The impossibility of compromise is glaringly evident. The

second quotation will give some idea of where we may expect to find the party of conciliation. In actual daily experience, where do we find these exponents of the "ca canny" policy of political action,—amongst that mixture of "salarist," "labor leaders" and "professional preachers" that we call the "middle class,"—the class that does not know where it is.

The middle class, or rather the "educated" class in society, are credited with being the "brains" of the capitalist system. The capitalist, as an individual, being non-essential in the processes of production and distribution, only appears as "the will" behind the world's activities in modern countries. The members of the middle class, therefore, appear as those possessed by "The Holy Ghost,"—the mysterious power that takes control of their energies to direct them into the presence of their Lord and Master—King Capital, whose kingdom is over all the earth. The "will" of capitalist society is expressed in the actual practice of extracting "surplus value," the failure to secure which has a disturbing influence on those failing in the task of administering the methods considered necessary to secure the desired end. This section of society, which has to attend to these higher duties of supervising the system of exploitation, are somewhat in the position that at one time priests held between the people and their Gods—intermediaries and conciliators. The members of this "middle class" are educated for various processes in life, the importance of their various vocations being measured in actual life by the standard of usefulness to the class which they hope to serve honorably. The usual idea of the "honor" is related to securing special privileges as a result of any particular ability they may manifest, and ultimately rest secure in "wealth"—the burden of their dream.

The capitalist class having relieved themselves to a great extent of the worry of looking after their affairs and entrusting the working of the system to the middle class, the idea has become current that in this section of society are to be found all the leaders necessary for any movement or undertaking. This finds its practical demonstration in the selection of political leaders like Lloyd George in England, and also accounts for the continual selection of middle class celebrities for the premiers of manufactured republics of recent years, such as Paderewski, Premier of Poland. It may also be recalled that the repudiation of Kerensky by the Russians was one of the sore blows to the vanity of these middle class democratic statesmen.

During periods of political and industrial crises, the peculiar position of the "educated" classes becomes very noticeable. The "middle" class is "be twixt heaven and hell"—their hope of ascending into the heaven of wealth or being plunged into the purgatory of the working class, is reflected in all sorts of warnings, first to the workers, and then to their masters. Throughout the whole strata of the "salarist" the desire to secure wealth and to cease from work is the great ambition, and place-hunting and all sorts of scheming to this end

are manifest in their ranks. Balzac's stories in "The Comedie Humane" are masterpieces in French literature, depicting the desperate struggles of the ambitious members of middle class society in France.

Whatever may be the opinions of the master class as to the abilities of their lieutenants, it must be admitted that there are great numbers of the workers, who are overawed by the appearance of wisdom amongst their "betters." Their achievements have been by no means slight, and the organization of industry owes a great deal to their abilities. The contradictions of the capitalist system, however, do not depend on them for solution. They are the servants of the capitalist class, and that class cannot solve their problem but at their own peril. The middle class, therefore, finds itself in the role of reformers or conciliators, when they are actively engaged in attending to the results of the development of capitalism. In the mania for "place hunting" they are being hard pressed by the capitalists' necessity of satisfying the ambitions of their "friends" in the labor camp.

Is it any wonder, therefore, that one has to digest so many political nostrums of those who would be the "saviours of society" and the "champions of democracy"? Always insisting on the raising up of "leaders," when the great demand is for teachers who are not afraid to place before the people the indisputable fact that society is based on a "Class Struggle" under the wages system. Imbued with the idea of the necessity of capital their position in society makes them the party of Compromise,—a policy impossible so far as the working class and capitalist class are concerned, when the struggle for political power becomes a conscious necessity in the minds of the workers. Whilst confusion reigns, their services are in demand in various ways—press, pulpit, or the judiciary.

Not all, however, are under the delusion of the capitalist psychology, and the only trouble with their disillusion has been the tendency to try and water down the "materialistic" political doctrines with humanitarian appeals to "cease this sordid appeal to class interests." A proletarian dictatorship as the final outcome of the struggle for political power looks too drastic, no matter how unavoidable it may prove through the necessity of events. The only useful recruits from the middle class to the working class movements are those who have thoroughly digested the fact that the coming revolution must be the work of the working class itself, and cannot be a "gift" from any class,—no matter how gifted it may think itself. The labor leader under the influence of "middle class" ideas has proved a hopeless failure,—and it may be some consolation to the members of the middle class to think that Marx, Engels, and many others have "done their bit" for the working class movement that will never be forgotten when men eventually get down to solving their industrial problems free from all class bias.

H. W.