

# The Labor Party

## A Criticism

In its editorial comments on April 17 the Toronto Globe said: "A Labor Party for Greater Toronto is an encouraging sign of active interest in public affairs. Participation in politics will be more enlightening than criticism." Members of Parliament, both Liberal and Conservative, and in Federal and Provincial Houses, have also said that more Labor members would be welcome—that they were needed.

A party which is welcomed by "old" parties and spoken of favorably in the old party press, is not a party much feared. Capitalism in Canada is not afraid of a Labor Party. The old parties know from experience that there is a big difference between saying and doing, and a Labor Party such as is being agitated for, and has been organized in Toronto, will promise much, but will not achieve much. It is not dangerous—it has no bite.

A Socialist Party is different. It demands the social ownership of capitalist property so that an end may be put to the exploitation of the working class. A Socialist Party is not "popular"—it menaces capitalist profit. But a Labor Party does not concern itself very much with the exploitation by the capitalists. Its demands are very moderate and "respectable." A common way in which labor leaders phrase their demands is the following: "We demand the eight-hour day. It has been proven that more can be done in eight than in ten hours, but the employers are so reactionary they do not even see this." The Laborites are right in asking for an eight-hour day, but if this very reform means a greater production and more profits for the capitalists, and if Laborites have nothing to say about this increased exploitation, they show themselves at the limits of their powers.

### The Vital Test

A movement must be judged, not by what it says it will do, by its ideals or claims, but by what it is and does. The Labor Party in Toronto, and in other parts of Canada, is composed of men who are dissatisfied with Liberalism and Conservatism, but are not in favor of Socialism, i.e., of demanding the whole product of their social toil. The Socialists criticize the Laborites not only for what they do, but for what they leave undone. To accomplish many reforms is not enough. A party which appeals to the workers for support on the ground that it favors improved conditions will be opposed by Socialists who (though they also favor better conditions) cannot stand for the exploitation of the masses, on which point the Laborites refuse to stand for the workers.

Miss Hughes might say that the workers cannot stop until they demand the whole of production; that Socialism is inevitable; that all things come "a step at a time," and by organizing Labor Parties the workers will learn to demand more and more, until eventually they demand the full programme of Socialism. Now, Miss Hughes may have a Socialist end in view, but her conception of how this aim will be accomplished is decidedly uncomplimentary to those organized in, say, the Greater Toronto Labor Party. For were it not for the prejudices of the workers, for their dead of the word "Socialism," for their inability to grasp the full meaning of the Socialist teaching, they might demand at once the full value of their product. But since these prejudices do exist, Miss Hughes would say nothing to the workers just now about Socialism, but have them organize first, become politically active, and then have them led gradually by the Socialists to ask for the abolition of capitalism. Miss Hughes as much as says that the To-

ronto Labor Party (and others) must become Socialist some day. If that day is far enough away it does not matter much to them—but the members of the Labor Party joined it because Socialism was too radical. Yet it was best for the leaders not to tell the members that Socialism was right! Once having got them "in" the leaders would gradually unfold their aims so as not to rouse the original anti-Socialist prejudices of the members!

### Drifting Backward

This idea of drifting towards Socialism, a step at a time, may, however, belong only to Miss Hughes and a few others. Even if all Laborites possessed it the Socialists would nevertheless point out the inconsistency in the Laborites' position. Theoretically and secretly they are for Socialism, practically they act only for reforms, and do not show their colors because they argue that if they told the working people that the capitalist system exploits them and that Socialism offers the remedy, this would prejudice the workers!

But it is not true that all men in Labor circles consider Socialism inevitable and desirable. Do Studholme, Richards, Watters, Marks, Stephenson, and others throughout Canada? Would any party they might organize be anti-capitalist? These men have said little in the past about the surplus value the masses produce for Canadian employers. They have stood for better working conditions, better wages, shorter hours, but they have also stood for capitalist robbery because they have not stood against it. All the present demand for independent political action on the part of labor springs from non-Socialist sources and has non-Socialist aims. That is what the Socialists see—and they would fail in their duty to the working-class if they failed to point out that in the long run they will gain nothing sufficiently substantial from parties which hedge on the question of economic exploitation. The only working-class party which can achieve practical success is a Socialist Party—all other so-called workers' parties must be deserted eventually by the workers for the Socialist Party. A Labor Party deserts the workers from its inception—they cannot ultimately accept its compromising "principles."

It is useless to say: "Had the Labor men supported the Canadian Socialist movement more completely friction would have been avoided. The Labor officials were not Socialists and therefore would not support Socialism. The antagonism between Labor and Socialist Parties rises mutually, though Laborites usually accuse the Socialists of using destructive tactics. Labor parties in provincial and municipal constituencies have frequently sought alliances with Socialists. Alliances are part of Labor Party tactics. Any future Labor Party in Canada should expect no alliance with a Socialist Party. If a Labor Party will ally itself with a Socialist Party, the Socialists know too well that a Labor-Liberal Alliance is also a possibility. On the other hand the Socialists cannot seek alliances because they make demands which no other party can make. An elected Socialist will vote in the interests of the workers just as ably as a Laborite, but the Socialists stand for the abolition of wage slavery, while a Laborite holds his peace on this the most important and essential need of the working class."

### Valued Criticism

In the March 23 issue of The Industrial Banner, the Socialists come in for a certain amount of criticism in a letter written by Mr. Urry. It is necessary to answer the charge that Socialists keep

Labor divided by showing that a Labor Party does not ask for complete social ownership of means of producing wealth, that consequently a Labor Party remains silent on the question of exploitation, which makes it inevitable that workers who do not wish to be exploited must go beyond a Labor platform to obtain their complete program. Mr. Urry says: " . . . while the Socialist party arrogate to themselves the sole right of representing, politically, the working classes, and will not work together with an I. L. Party, they are responsible for the friction that takes place. It has been proved by actual experience that workmen in this district (Port Arthur-Fort William) will not join the Socialist Party in large numbers while it employs the destructive criticism, even against Labor-men themselves, that it indulges in." And again: " . . . I believe the action of both the Socialist Party and that of the Social Democratic Party is not in accordance with real democratic liberation and will never appeal to the working classes."

It would be fortunate if there need be no criticism. But this arises not merely from a critical spirit. It is called forth by the compromising attitude of Labor parties, and chiefly by their inadequate programs, which refuse to meet the full needs of the workers.

A Socialist Party differs from a Labor Party just as a Labor Party differs from a Liberal Party. A Socialist Party demands for Labor all that Labor produces, and any party, including a Labor Party, which does not demand as much, stands to that extent for working-class exploitation, and must therefore meet with criticism from the Socialists. The platform of the Greater Toronto Labor Party has not yet been issued. It dare not intimate that its aim is Socialist, for that would be admitting that its originators concealed their ultimate aims from the membership. But it will not be Socialist, because it does not stand for Socialism—if it did it would say so. Where there is a fundamental difference in position the weaker must be given up. There is nothing to do but face the situation. For Socialists to compromise and give ground and support to non-Socialist organizations is not merely theoretically wrong—it is for us a practical blunder which would bring disastrous results.

The majority of workers in Canada still consider it their policy to support a Liberal or Conservative Party and not a Socialist Party. Many hold a Labor Party preferable to a Socialist Party. But a Labor Party with no aim for the future, with no present conception of capitalist society, and no demand for common social ownership of wealth-producing agencies, might as well call itself by another name. It is not anti-capitalist. And since it has no voice to oppose capitalism, it fails to merit the support of the working classes. Dissatisfied workmen and trades union leaders may build up a Labor Party, but only class-conscious Socialists can destroy the capitalist system.

MERVYN SMITH

### Labor's First Charter.

May 1, 1917, gives promise of becoming an Historic Land Mark of Social Progress, and more significant in view of the fact that Labor's Historic Banner, "The Red Flag," now floats over Russia and her dependencies. We call upon all Men and Women who labor in order to live, to make this event something more significant than a mere parade. May the spirit of May unite you in Mass action to end oppression in this our country as a herald of the coming day of our Social emancipation.

During one of the Samnite wars, in the year B. C. 309, and at the moment when the Romans wanted more money than they could collect, the consors issued a refusal to permit the collegium of musicians, or musicians' union, to

play at the feast of Jupiter at the expense of the city. It had been their annual custom to play at the shrine, and as they had always been lavishly rewarded, they took it for an unwarrantable deprivation. Besides this, being voting unions, they belonged to a powerful political body of many trades who elected into power the commissioners of the public works. These in turn appointed them to jobs under government employ. Braced by the justice of their right, they called upon their quinquennial, or lord-master of the unions, who convoked their advisory board. On deliberation it was voted to resist the penurious demand and strike work, let the consequences be what they would. At the head of their military column, their red vexillum proudly waving at the front, they set up a march with this well-known flaming red banner to a distant town across the Tiber. They were aware that the superstitious Roman aristocracy would not dare to offend Jupiter, their great protecting divinity, to whose honor, not that of their own goddess, Minerva, were to be devoted these celebrations of music and praise. They judged correctly. But, being straightforward and ingenious, they knew only the honorable and manly way to win. They were not adept in the tricks of politicians, and as a consequence got outwitted just as they were outwitted on a vaster scale by similar cunning, described in our chapter on the Roman conquests. The methods of this trick, as told by the historian, were as follows:

The Senate of Rome sent a commission to the neighboring town of Tiber, now Tivoli, whither the strikers had marched in a body, to ask of the political council of the place, its co-operation and intercession, with a view to induce the musicians to come out of their sulks, return to the feasts and give Jupiter the music for nothing. The reception was friendly. Negotiations were immediately opened with the strikers; but in vain. The workmen were uncompromising. All solicitations were refused. It was now the very day before that set for the feasts. Fear that the gods would envelop them with wrath began to make Romans tremble. A stratagem was agreed upon. The musicians were to be asked to give a concert. At that pompous display they were to be inveigled into accepting potations which they seldom refused. Stuffed with wine, and when all were unconscious with inebriation, they were to be taken bodily in cushioned chariots back to the eternal city and landed safely at the Roman forum, where all was in readiness for the sacrifices of the morrow. In the early dawn the sacrifices would begin. It was a cause of great sport for thousands. The multitude is a greater moral power to the workingman on strike than the councils of the great. And when they awoke from their stupor and found themselves suffused with a friendly hurrah of nearly all the population of Rome gushing with flatteries around them, they imbibed the full force of the joke by which they had been outwitted. They consented to play, but not until a stipulation was agreed to permitting them, annually in the future, to hold a jubilation, the 13th day of June, and march with their red flag and carnival uniforms through the streets, clothed with an accredited permission to solicit contributions for their benefit.

This surprising concession to them by the senate was fully equivalent to a complete success. Their strike had been won; for such a privilege accorded them in legal form was to go into practice the very next year and remain available forever, bringing them annual tribute, comfort and respect.

LESTER F. WARD.

If the working class refused to fight the battles of their exploiting masters not another war would ever be declared.

War is the crime of crimes and the monumental shame of civilization.