

# The Old Story

OUR comrade makes two statements with which we agree whole-heartedly—1st, that his reply is "a return, more or less remotely, to the 'straight issue.'" It is,—exceedingly remote. 2nd, that it is "weird stuff." So weird indeed it might be an effusion from the Psychological Research Society. And he makes two statements which cause wonder as to whether he reads the articles criticised. We did not say, or imply, that "humanity stepped maturely developed into its straight issues," nor that there was "a separate organ of knowledge, by which peoples chose their particular directions." To which we will return later.

Our comrade's opening remarks seem to mean, that the material conditions of developing society, in all their varied interactions continually tend to the creation of a wider humanity, provided that "no overmastering circumstances arise to defeat the formation of social institutions." With which we have no quarrel. That is certainly enough, the circumstantial of human evolution, but it is no criterion of social revolution.

The question of the straight issue is a direct question of tactics, i.e., whether socialism be achieved through class-conscious understanding, or by the stepping stones of labor reform. It has no direct mediacy, with the broader aspect of "humanity." Consequently, "humanity" does not "step maturely into its straight issues;" but through them it rises to higher wellbeing, and the vantage of its progress is proportionate to all sociality of preception. In this human sense, "the life process is a going concern, the pace set by productive development." But it is not a going concern, as a process of growth, like the birth of an oak from an acorn. It is a going concern only in the mechanical connectiveness of the physical, like the development of an invention. In fact, society is an invention. Consequently it is capable of perfection by the visioning mind, and therefore responsive to the conditioning of mind. Hence the issues of the way, the forces that influence its progress, are detailed and determined by the multifarious vicissitudes of conscious development. It may lag, or it may change by sudden mutations. It may be set back to develop with a new vigor. "Our" own capitalist system from the days of that bluff rascal, Henry VIII. proceeded with conservative deliberateness, until the coming of the power machine. Its development, in the last 100 years, overtops the mightiest Empire of all the ages. In half that time Germany rose from a 5th rate power to a first place in the sun. And in four tragic years reduced to a colony of the powers. Japan is a close second, and in their progress they overthrow the strongest traditions and most established aptitudes, replacing them with their own new particular interests—and their habits. The potent cause of that advance was the close perception of that interest—sharpened by its own conditioning or diffident with the incidence of yesterday. Its virility concordant with its freedom from trammelling convention. Caused by the process of conditions, my Com. not by the process of habits. Created out of the sensitive fabric of time-need, whose discipline in turn, creates, moulds and textures habit and aptitude.

Clearly enough, therefore, "material development unfolds the issues and we must deal with them, adequately or not, as we see them." Hence, if we see them in the twilight haze of "practical politics" they are draped in the unlovely garb of trade issues. If we see them in the clear light of the socialist concept; in the uncompromising features of the class struggle. "Maturity," says our Com. "comes only by struggle over issues, by living the life of the process. . . It is a nature imposed necessity." Our Com. rambles along like a bible student on the periphery of the main issue. Due perhaps to the prismatic hues of the inner mind, or steeple chasing, barebacked on Pegasus, without a bridle.

Certainly to struggle is a necessity. But taking

"maturity" in its implied ethical sense, i.e., success; developed potentiality; that maturity, follows of necessity, only within the ambit of its particular conditioning. Outside of the imposed terms the struggle is a losing quantity—or an expression of X. Consequently, the life of the process, is commensurate with the process of the particular struggle; and the issues of that struggle are therefor narrowed down, to the issue of the terms of its law. And in particular case, the term of its law, is the class-conscious perception of our social conditioning. Sequentially, therefor, all reform—of institution or condition—that leaves that percept untouched (as it must do) will produce struggle, but not maturity; will produce confusion, but not regeneration. And the whole paraphernalia of its expediencies, of palliation which are no more, than the ethic of temperate exploitation, can only lead, in a longer or shorter term, to all the aggrandisement of the ruling class, on one hand, to the progressive degradation of the subject class, on the other; and to the final ruination of capitalist civilisation. But, that society will come to economic freedom by that route, is neither a necessity nor a certainty. That may be the meandering track society may elect to follow, i.e., its contingent circumstance may so impel it. And even at that its "maturity" is finally dependent on the clear perception of its slavery, and consequently, its cause and relief.

In effect, Com. "C" admits this, for he says "neither can a new class . . . create a new social life . . . merely because the old society has become intolerable." His proviso "that unless the necessary cultural development has already taken place" is beside the point. Because a new class cannot create the institutions of its complex, nor the cultural developments of that complex, until by whatsoever means, it has swept away the hampering institutions of its predecessor. It can only sweep away those institutions when it has developed the necessary power, and power is the product of an understanding. The development of the capitalist system has already organized social production. Its further development is almost completely prohibited by its own necessary restrictions. Consequently the inevitable tensions of its social organisation must tend towards social comprehension of that organisation. And from the cleavage strain of that comprehension springs the unity of common interest. In other words, the Capitalist system—and all its self-compelled remedial activities—prepare the mechanical form of the revolution. But its mental reflex has its roots in the perception of the class struggle, and because that reflex flourishes only in the potent soil of antagonism, it can not only, not advance through reform, i.e., the organisation of its restriction, but in complete struggle against it, in the complete negation of the organized forms of established conventions. Moreover, neither the conditions nor the methods of the medieval bourgeois are any guide to us, the modern proletariat. The power arrayed against us now, is mightier and more concentrated, than against them. The conditions of their revolution, were purely political. They could buy and bribe and dieker and counterdeal. They could share the rule and the plunder. The conditions of our revolution are social. We can neither buy nor bribe. We cannot share the office. We have no plunder to divide. And we have every tradition of authority to violate and set aside. "We have nothing to lose, but our chains; a world to gain." And because of the mighty imports of the conditions and the stakes, our sole hope of triumph is the clearest undeviating issue of the class struggle. The labor party on the other hand, is a younger son of that vanished bourgeoisie. That is why its methods are the traditions of extinct traders—the petty hucksterery of "freedom." That is why it is not an expression of independence. That is why it cannot call the bluff of tradition. And it never will. It will decay with the institutional system of which it is a composite

member. Only its skeletal form will remain upon which a new virility of untraditioned progress, will construct a mightier edifice of knit and visioned resistance.

We did not say, or imply that "people chose by a separate organ of knowledge." But we do say that habits and aptitudes of peoples and nations, were no more the disposing caused of their varying movements and directions than Clydesdales and hackneys were differentiated by an aptitude for work; or that whales and manatees took to the open sea because of an "indisposition" for salt water. That is the evolution of fairyland. Man and horse and whale took their especial directions not from habit, but by the compulsion of living conditions that violated their habit, and spun them out in new cycles of development in the restless energies of change. The robber barons of the dark ages did not dot Europe with their strategic castles, by reason of habit, they chose by clear concept of their means of power. The owners of England did not corral John at Runnymede, because of their common dispositions to short change their overlords, but because they were class conscious. The Gothic Empire of Rome—the noblest of its times—crumbled, without leaving a land mark, not for inaptitude for government but because it countered the rapacious plunderbund of Italy. The Russian people did not adopt the Greek church, because of a predilection for Byzantine ikons and scapularies. It was fastened upon them by an organized hierarchy, conscious of its means of control. Clovis and Pippin, Martel and Charles, Lewis and Lothair, did not crimson the soil of France with rapine and violence, by habit—though such was the wonted ruffianism of their kind. But because of a conscious comprehension of the means and will to power. The people of today do not fasten Capital upon their backs, like the hermit crab with the anemone, by the custom of authority, but because of the inculcated lie of authority. In every case it is the ignorance of the people to the actual relationship of reality. To break that ignorance is the task of the hour. To break the apathy of its 'habit' not by the circumlocutions of custom, but by direct appeal to fact.

"The reason a child knows little and an adult knows much is because the latter has formed habits, the other has still to acquire." Not so. Again we say, that habit is the derivative of the system: the system is not derivative from habit. The reason a child knows little, and an adult little more, is because the former has not the elaborated experience which forms the mind, the latter is denied access to the available means of knowledge. Habit is but a secondary thing: a barrier to the ethic of law. If a carpenter built by habit, we would be resident in towers of Pisa. If doctors treated by habit, they would soon be in prison. While a politician is so little ruled by habit that he is actually versatile in the mercurian artistry of diplomacy. An electrician, who lived by habit, would live precariously. A researcher who operated the factories of industry by habit, would soon be on the street. A financier who traded by habit, would soon trade in the margins of poverty. And a proletariat attempting to live by habit, would soon solve the great mystery. We no more think with our habits, than we see with our eyes, or dream with our consciousness. These are but the mirrors of cosmic impress. Change the form and the answering image is faithful as a shadow in the sun. Conversely, color the image, and it flashes back, in reflexive sequence on the living magma of time. The mind is the "organ of knowledge"—fertilised with the heritage of the ages. It is the one fount of power, the motive source of progress; the moving reason of change; the living hope of humanity. By it we know; and by it we escape. The age of habit has less place in the machine era than ever. Like forelocked time, it belongs to a bygone day. Our life and times call for mental alertness; for quick-witted resource; for unerring ac-