

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE NEW "LABOR" PARTY?

Is It Class-Conscious? -- Is It Anti-Capitalist? -- Is It Against Wage-Slavery?

The inauguration of a Labor Party in Toronto is now a matter of history, having now reached to full-blown status with a platform. As yet the baby politician is unnamed.

We are now in a much better position to judge of its merits and demerits. There is a great desire on the part of some of our members to ally themselves with this new party. We are informed that in Winnipeg some of our members have held cards in a similar organization for some length of time. We desire to point out to those who anticipate an alliance with the said bodies, that so far as we are able to judge of the principles and platform of the said party, it is a distinct contravention of our own platform and principles in so far as they omit mention of the class struggle and abolition of wages system. Nor do its promoters avow themselves even anti-capitalists. To those who sit in the seat of judgment the only constitutional procedure for us to adopt is to declare any such affiliation unconstitutional.

We are fully aware that such a rigid adherence to constitution would probably result in many secessions from the party, and that the changes in the relative position of our party to such organizations, undergone during the last three years necessitate a general referendum of the party members before we could be justified in taking drastic action that will undoubtedly have a very important bearing on the future of our movement.

Either we must conform to these changes in order to gain political prestige, or be prepared to allow those who have no objection to direct the workers in this time of stress, and merely concern ourselves with "theoretical nicety."

A comparative study of the Labor and Liberal platforms as outlined at the present time strikes a class-conscious worker as being singularly akin to each other. We do not mean to infer that they were drawn up by the same identical bodies, but, rather, that the mental attitude of each applies the

same process of deduction in relation to the present situation and leaves entirely out of consideration any tenet that would adversely affect capitalist profits in the main.

It is not our purpose to present any general adverse criticism at the present time, but we feel that the statement made by Miss Hughes calls for some reply. She criticized the Grits and Tories and urged the men to lay aside their Socialism in order to be united against the bosses. Let us say with all fairness to Miss Hughes that we admire her for her courage and sincerity; but would point out that neither courage nor sincerity are the basic factors in a political organization, and by no means as valuable as principles and intelligence. We possess a degree of both courage and sincerity and sincerely dare to challenge her wrath when she, a mere "Kindergarten Child in Political Economy," with only two weeks of labor in industry to her credit, who knows nothing about great working-class political movements and the travail of their birth, the wonderful accretions of knowledge that have come by experience, will glibly tell us to lay aside our Socialism—the thing we live for, fight for, and, if need be, are prepared to die for.

Socialism, the only hope of an enslaved class, the principles for which our great and noble dead suffered the agonies of poverty, the loss of wives and children, imprisonment foul and brutal, they who died that we might live, who studied in order that we might understand the laws of life and point the way to freedom.

As well to ask the earth to stay her course, and the rich blood that made our banner red co-mingled with ours, be perfidiously turned to blue before a Socialist will turn his back upon the light that alone will illumine the way to his emancipation.

In reference to the statement of our friend Joe Marks, viz.: "There is a great need for a Labor Party, apart from the Socialist, or any organization

of reformers," we desire to state that Karl Mart was much more reasonable in his statement: "The tendency of capitalist production is not to raise wages, but to sink the average standard of wages; such being the case, it would be foolish not to resist the encroachments of capitalism, as such a refusal would result in them being degraded to one level mass of broken wretches beyond salvation."

We differ with the platform not so much for what it contains, but for the more important factors so singularly omitted, such as the abolition of the wages system, as the only permanent solution to the ills from which we suffer, or, the abolition of all forms of profit with which our social ills are a necessary counterpart.

The policy adopted by the labor organizations in time past has been—You must not form an organization in competition with those already existing, but stay with those already existing and bore from within. To do otherwise you become a scab.

We may be pardoned by replying, under the present circumstances you are "Political Scabs." Join up with the working class political organizations at present existing and bore from within also. Surely you cannot but admit that it would be in harmony with your logic as applied to the industrial field? Why not to the political field?

We have no desire to enter into conflict with any political organization of workers. We realize the necessity for unity, a unity based on intelligence, a unity of aims and aspirations. It is not necessary to begin where our fathers began. It is logical to begin where they left off. All that we ask of the worker is that he enter into the experience of those who have gone before, take up the fight where they left off. We are of one class. We have the same enemies to contend with. "Come up! It's lighter up here!"

Sir,—I do not know that I quite understand the article on "The Demand for a Distinct Labor Party in Politics"—and perhaps I might not agree with its veils. If the Labor Party it has in view as "truly a labor party" is one which stands firmly for the class struggle, then of course the S. D. P. should look with favor upon its growth. But why a new party in that case—does not the S. D. P. already exist? Undoubtedly there is much latent and active unrest in Canada, but it is of such a character as will under present

conditions express itself politically in more radicalism. The formation of a Labor Party in the Dominion, something like the Labor Parties in Great Britain or Australia, would never serve the ultimate interests of the workers in anything like the same degree as a possibly smaller and less ostentatious party whose views were clear and definite, one aiming to abolish capitalism. Floating discontent may organize a Labor Party, but unless it is class-conscious it becomes a capitalist weapon, and must ultimately be deserted by the workers themselves.

MERVYN SMITH.

Kitchener, Ont.

We discussed the subject of the Independent Labor Party which is being organized here and analyzed their proposed platform of principles. We have made several amendments and also certain conditions which we propose to submit to them.

As an addition to the platform, we suggest the following:

As it is freely admitted that the acquirement and control of a few, of the necessities of life of all the people is the cause of the present high cost of living, and of the deplorable condition of labor, and its helplessness to remedy matters under existing conditions, the following planks should take precedence in the platform, and the whole strength of the movement concentrated on their consummation.

The immediate acquirement by municipalities, the provincial or federal governments, of all grain elevators, storage warehouses, cold storage plants, abattoirs and other distributing agencies in order to relieve the farmer and consumer of the extortions of the middlemen and so reduce the cost of living.

The collective ownership and democratic control of railroads, telegraphs, telephones, express service, steamboat lines and all other social means of transportation and communication and of all large scale industries.

The collective ownership and democratic control of mines, quarries, oil wells, gas wells, forests, water power and of all large sources of electric power.

The collective ownership of land wherever practicable, and in cases where impracticable the appropriation by taxation of the annual rental value of all land held for speculation and exploitation.

CHAS. H. NEWMAN.

Niagara Falls, Ont.

OUR LITERARY CAUSERIE

SHAKESPEARE'S AGE AND OUR OWN.

By Maurice Spector

What a certain critic has said of Plato may with equal truth, be allowed of Shakespeare: "He is for all time; yet to understand him rightly, he must be studied in relation to his own age." That is to say, it is impossible to abstract Shakespeare from the historical period in which he worked. For one need not be an extreme adherent of the theory that the environment is the greatest determining factor in an artist's development, in order to admit readily that the various characteristics of the great dramatist's age were far too significant to have missed exercising a pervading influence on his achievements. It is our present purpose to make a brief study of these characteristics and to compare or contrast them with the outstanding features of the Twentieth Century.

The spirit of the Elizabethan age was dominated by two epoch-making historical movements—the Renaissance and the Reformation. The former, by opening the flood-gates of classical culture, broke the spell of Europe's long intellectual torpor of the Middle Ages, and

inaugurated a period of enlightenment. The mind, released from the iron sway of mediaeval religious orthodoxy with its constant brooding on the problem of heaven and hell, was free now to speculate on new contents and new forms for those contents whether they dealt with astronomy or literature. The Reformation too, was not only a religious experience of the Northern European nations; it was also an additional invaluable impetus to the spirit of criticism independence and protest which is fundamental for all original thought. The outcome of the inter-acting influence of these two movements, was to make the Elizabethan Age eminently practical and positive. Accordingly Professor Dowden, a critic of Shakespeare, asserts that "in that period instead of substituting supernatural powers and persons and events for the natural facts of the world, men recurred to these facts and found in them inspiration.

As the "heirs of all preceding ages" we have naturally inherited and retained both the positivism and the protestantism of the Elizabethan Age. Superficially it might appear, then, that the form and spirit of the two ages under consideration were similar. But

in reality there is a profound difference owing to the very fact of the development of the positivism and protestantism which were only in their genesis during the Elizabethan Age.

The freedom of scientific research has become a matter of course with us and anyone attempting to restrict it would be justly considered an absurd anachronism. Science has in our days been so widely applied to practical life, and the development of machinery has been so amazingly extensive that the external structure of society would seem radically changed to a resurrected Elizabethan. Our methods of transportation communication and production, with all pertaining thereto, have made an industrial age. They have destroyed feudalism, with its problems and relations, and have instead raised new problems peculiar to industrialism. The class-struggle is now no longer between the noble and the burgher, but between the middle class—burgher class—and the proletariat. We read very little of any activities of the Elizabethan proletariat—it seems to have lacked effective protesting force and individuality; whereas the modern proletariat which daily streams in thousands in and out of the factories, is a power to be reckoned with in the social and political life of the state. It is the demos which is leading the new proletariat movement, this time not against religious corruption, but against social corrup-

tion and injustice. For here lies an important difference between our age and the Sixteenth Century—it is more concerned with social problems than with religious issues. And herein is evidenced the greatest positivism of modern democracy, which strives to solve practical questions of human social conditions rather than the problems of religion.

Democracy, the general critical interest and active participation of the people—the masses—in social as well as the political aspects of natural life, that is the concept which marks such a vestal distinction between our age and Elizabeth's. The latter was an aristocratic, monarchical age, to which democracy as we understand it, was unknown, or at least unfamiliar. It is indeed true that Puritanism had a democratizing tendency, but the prominence of the religious issue almost obscured the political in its struggle with the royal authority. The fact of the Restoration finally states the lack of fundamental democracy at that time.

As might be expected, the attitude towards democracy in political and social life of the two periods is reflected in their respective literatures. Elizabethan drama is said to be a drama without a "tendency," whereas modern drama is represented by a Shaw, an Ibsen, or Strindling, has a "tendency," that is,

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