

Tactics—a la Mode

The Split

FOR many moons we have been discussing the question of tactics with exhaustive argument pro and con and, during that period much ink has been spilled, many wordy and heated arguments have been indulged in, meetings and debates have been held. We are not agreed, and a split has taken place within our ranks as a result.

Perhaps the most peculiar and interesting feature of this controversy is that nearly all factions now agree upon one essential point, namely, that the workers of Canada or upon the American continent are not as yet prepared for any "action" as far as their emancipation is concerned. All realize the need for education.

We have been busily occupied in discussion and have split over the question of tactics when spade work was and is vitally necessary,—when, in fact, there never was a more pressing need for a systematic and organized, efficient and more extensive method of propaganda. The last federal elections prove (if any proof is required) that the workers are not only not ready for that "action" but are predominantly possessed of master class ideas. It is self-evident because they overwhelmingly supported the candidates of their exploiters and gave but little to Socialists, or even so-called Labor candidates. The fact is undoubtedly discouraging to the class-conscious and must be faced even by those advocating "action." Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of the last general election was the determination to defeat the Meighen Government; this is, however, far removed from the psychology of change in the idea to abolish the present slavish system of exploitation.

In view of the fact, then, what can a party of "action" do? Is it to assist the workers to accomplish immediate aims? Oh, no; we will at once be told. We have a certain aim and object and our "action" must conform to them. Which is all too true.

And yet it seems to me that underlying the controversy and all this discussion the idea exists, namely, of expecting the great mass who are not class-conscious to act as though they were. There seems to be the vague notion also that by changing our tactics the workers will support the revolutionary movement even while they are themselves non-revolutionary, which is really to expect the miraculous. We cannot ourselves agree, even while there is plenty of work to do in elementary educational work. "Action!" In what form?

There is no desire to quibble over words. But if the word action is to concretely mean the publishing of more Socialist papers, getting members willing to distribute them,—more classes with an ever increasing number of pupils,—Colleges wherein a thorough knowledge of those subjects that vitally affect the workers, will be taught and which will also produce more teachers and speakers, why not say so. Is the word action to mean the founding of bureaus of information with classified data and that the vanguard of the proletarian movement is about to be stimulated into giving more time to the propounding of its ideas to the workers? If so, then "action" is not only welcome but all would agree as to its need, for the apathy that has prevailed within the movement has been apparent.

The Apathy

Capitalist society today is "enjoying" the benefits of the present method of production and distribution. Millions of workers are out of a job. The means of life being owned by the few in a society wherein wealth can be produced so abundantly, reacts to the detriment of the many who own nothing but their power-to-labor. To the workers, therefore, the benefits of our modern civilization, with its gigantic machines and efficiency organizations can be expressed in unemployment, increasing poverty and misery, degradation and general insecurity in earning sufficient to supply their meagre needs.

And, as the number of unemployed increases the ever-elusive job is more difficult to find; as a result the competition between workers to sell their labor-power becomes keener. How to live; how to obtain or retain that elusive job is a very important question.

The workers, as sellers of that commodity labor-power, competing in a market that is decidedly unfavorable, especially in all periods of industrial depressions, are at times forced by the very conditions to accept lower wages or a lower price for the commodity sold. The competition for jobs being keener plays havoc with the total membership of organized workers, craft and industrial. In fact it can be said that the membership of organized labor increases and decreases with the regularity of "good" and "bad" times, or, in other words, labor organizations are more powerful in those periods of time that are relatively favorable or weak when strength is the pressing need.

Millions of workers are unemployed, cuts in wages have been made and still more are pending, and the mental condition of the labor movement is one of apathy. After a period of relative "prosperity" it is perhaps the inevitable sequence, nevertheless the fact remains that the workers are not only ignorant of their class position but also indifferent. There is a realization by the worker, however, that his organizations are unable to successfully resist and that his wages must fall.

Apathy! What other condition could prevail in the great mass who hardly realize the class nature of the society in which they live, and decidedly do not understand the elementary principles of that competitive system and therefore do not know the causes underlying their conditions!

These are the causes of the apathy from which the class-conscious are not immune, for the Socialist movement is comprised of workers who are subjected to the same terms as the great mass in this competitive system. It may be a "natural" consequence also that this small vanguard do in a measure "reflect" the "mood" of the masses. Be that as it may, we must not underestimate the effect of the lack of financial support which limits many of the avenues of propaganda, poorly attended meetings, and the indifference on the part of the workers (even the organized) to the movement.

Tactics

A good deal has been said about the revolutionary section taking part in the struggle of the workers, from which the charge is frequently made that the S. P. of C. has remained aloof.

This charge is more a difference of words than of fact, for its members, being workers, are forced by the very conditions to unite with their kind in the various industries. They cannot very well escape, and being Socialists have undoubtedly performed good work within their organizations. If, therefore, we are Socialists, we only differ from the mass in so far as we are class-conscious and possess knowledge, and our business is to tell our fellow-workers.

Of course there are several ways of doing that. One can be difficult to understand, by using too many technical terms. The subject matter is sufficiently complex to make the use of simple language essential and necessary, unless speaking to students. There is also the offensive abuse of language which only adds to the many difficulties, and some have the mistaken idea that being revolutionary and being personally offensive are synonymous terms.

How then is a "party of action" to act differently from the existing organization is another question. Obviously there is the method of forming a caucus within industrial organizations which also has its limits. Strike committees are not elected out of political parties; they are elected from the rank and file of labor, through their unions. If in a strike Socialists are elected to the strike committee that committee cannot impose very much upon the membership without its general consent and endorsement.

It cannot transform the immediate issue into a fight for social ownership or communism and retain their support.

The workers are not Communists, not even in sympathy.

Let's get down to spade work.

A. J. BEENY.

FRANK CASSIDY IN THE EAST

COMRADE Frank Cassidy has had a busy time in Eastern Canada of late. In the Maritime provinces the I. L. P. bodies are fairly active and Frank reports that according to his view what is required there is educational classes, because the standard of education is not very high. He laid out his plan of campaign accordingly, and his efforts have earned keen appreciation throughout the maritime.

Here are some reports from "The Citizen," Halifax, Nova Scotia:—

"Frank Cassidy, of Vancouver, B. C., has been giving a series of lectures of an educational nature at the I. L. P. hall, 54 Argyle street. He has dealt with wars and their economic causes; the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Paris Commune, the industrial revolution from handicraft to machine production, the Evolution of the human race and the Russian Revolution.

The hall has been filled to capacity every evening, and it is marvellous how an individual can carry such a large amount of knowledge without notes or even without any reference books to refer to at hand.

The chief points in all his lectures was to show that no matter what reforms have been brought about, the condition of the workers has not changed. He showed clearly that in all wars the worker has done the fighting, and after the war he has come home to sometimes find his home destroyed and he himself is forced to the city to be a wage slave.

Mr. Cassidy dealt with the conditions that forced the inhabitants of the Highlands of Scotland to emigrate to New Scotland (Nova Scotia). The Paris Commune of 1871 was dealt with and showed how the ruling class of France and Germany wanted to destroy the Workers' Republic of France, and how thirty thousand of the best of the French proletariat were brutally murdered in the streets of Paris.

In all of his lectures the speaker exposed the treachery of the bourgeoisie and the tactics they will adopt to deceive the workers about what is happening in other parts of the world.

Mr. Cassidy is touring the country giving these lectures with the idea of getting the workers to read and study, as the bankruptcy of capitalism is inevitable. Mr. Cassidy is quite a young man, and secured his education through practical experience and through reading late to the wee sma' hours after working ten hours a day."

Another report reads:

"The speaker first dealt with the term materialism, and sketched the growth of the human race from protoplasmic days to the modern man. He showed how ideas were formed, how reasoning was acquired, and interpreted history from the materialistic viewpoint. He explained the difference between the theological and materialistic interpretation of history. He explained that the former theory interpreted nature from the creative standpoint, while the latter claims that nature always existed and therefore never can be destroyed. He dealt with time and space, the sun and planets, and said there were 72 elements in matter. He traced the upward growth of man from the brute creation through the various stages of existence, from the individual to the tribal, and to the communal.

"We must go back to the past to find the meaning and the origin of many things as we have them today. All had their inception in the past, all have origin in our savage ancestry. There were 120 parts of the human being which were useless, because they have not been used for centuries.

"Mr. Cassidy expounded Darwin's theory of evolution, and dealt with the theories as set forth by other scientists and philosophers. He said that man

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