## A Controversy

EDITOR'S NOTE.—Both of the disputants are well known to "Clarion' readers and to the Socialist movement in this country. Both of them have come through the same "school of thought," and they are well grounded on the fundamental principles of Socialist education. Their contributions presented hereunder appear exactly as written. Any further contributions that may contain apparent personal references will suffer mutilation while in our care. There is room here for discussion and we see no reason why it should not result in a continued interest in the Russian situation, and a thorough understanding of the problems, past and present, of the Russian comrades.

## A. McKENZIE CRITICIZES J. A. McD.'s ARTICLE "ON COPYING THE BOLSHEVIKI."

Comrade Editor,-

In the issue of November 15th of the "Western Clarion," appeared an article under the heading "On Copying the Bolsheviki," by J. A. McD.

Such an article coming from such a well known and voluminous writer, and accepted teacher of Marxism in our official organ, is to say the least, rather surprising to many of us, and demands some criticism.

In the said article there are really only two paragraphs that could be seriously objected to, namely, the first and eighteenth, but they so contradict the rest of the article as to misrepresent the true significance of the Russian Revolution.

I shall let the first paragraph go with a very brief statement, as the other one requires a much more comprehensive rep<sup>1</sup>y. Indeed the first paragraph, to do it justice, would require quite a discussion.

He says in the third sentence, first paragraph: "We understood, as we still understand, that Bolshevism is not Socialism." Then what is it? And what is "Socialism?" Without going into the story of the origin of the name "Bolshevik," it will suffice here to state that before the Revolution (March) the Bolsheviki were the truly Marxist faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party,-the other being the Mensheviki. After the November (Bolshevist) Revolution, when they had obtained a majority in the Soviets, they simply put the Marxian theory into practice, and have been doing so ever since. For, be it remembered, Marxism is no iron clad system to be imposed "ready made" so to speak, on society. But the great lesson to be learned from Marxism is its method. And, true to that method, the Soviet Government is building up a Socialist society. True, they are building it in the face of enormous difficulties, but they are accomplishing it well. And whoever expects to find an ideal system in a few years in the face of uninterrupted warfare, expects the impossible. But nevertheless it is Socialism in the making.

Here is what he says in the eighteenth paragraph: 'They have Revolution in Russia, but at what a cost? Thousands wiped out of existence through the ignorance of their follow men. Were the majority of Russian workers solid for Socialist principles, no nation, nor group of nations, could thwart their efforts. They would not be compelled to accept as allies the factions opposed to them. They would not have to accept 'Tilsit Peaces,' or shake the bloody hand of Capitalist Europe. These are the defeats that we can learn from. These are the obstacles that we must shun."

The above is from the pen of a supposed Marxian Socialist. It is really vulgarized Marxism. The Marxism of Kautsky, the Socialist renegade. It is a gross misstatement of facts, and shows the inability of the writer to appreciate the solution of the many difficult problems in a practical manner which have confronted the Russian workers since they took the management of their affairs into their own hands. Not only the above, but in a previous sentence J. A. McD. states that "As many impartial persons and delegations have testified, it has had a detrimental effect, in many ways, on the Working Class Movement in other countries."

Let us deal with that paragraph piece by piece! He says: "They have Revolution in Russia, but at

what a cost? Thousands wiped out of existence through the ignorance of their fellow men." As a matter of fact very little blood was shed in the Bolshevist (November) Revolution. More blood was shed in combatting the counter-revolution, aided by armed foreign intervention, and the cruel blockade. But it must be remembered that Russia lost more men in the Imperialist War than any other nation, and I am willing to wager that there have been less people killed from the beginning of the November Revolution up to date, less than 100 per cent than in the said war. And that mostly by foreign intervention.

Then he says: "Were the majority of Russian workers solid for Socialist principles, no nation, nor group of nations, could thwart their efforts." The majority of Russian workers were, and are, solid for Socialist principles, otherwise they would not be in power today. As far as other nations thwarting their efforts, that is only partially true, and besides, that is not the fault of the Russian workers, but of the bitter hostility of every capitalist power in the world, and of the general political backwardness of the working classes of those various powers, especially the Entente.

Further on he says: "They would not be compelled to accept as allies the factions opposed to them." What does he mean by that sentence? It must be the participation of the Social Revolutionaries of the Left, and maybe some of the Menshivik factions in the government who were at one time opposed to the Bolshevist programme, but who now, owing to the development of events, have seen their mistake and thrown in their lot with the Bolsheviki. Therefore they can hardly be said to oppose the Bolsheviki.

And again: "They would not have to accept 'Tilsit Peaces,' or shake the bloody hand of Capitalist Europe." I suppose "Tilsit Peaces" must be the Treaty of Brest Litovsk, with perhaps the separate treaties which the Soviet Government concluded with Esthonia, Latvia, Georgia, Lithunia, Finland, and Poland.

Anyone familiar with the events which led up to the Brest Litovsk Treaty, and the necessity to conclude such a treaty (space forbids me dwelling on it here), will understand that far from being a mistake it turned out to be the only way of avoiding the probability of being wiped out, and as a matter of fact, subsequent events proved it to be one of the greatest tractical moves of the Revolution.

The conclusion of the other treaties are also to be considered as great achievements of the peaceful policy of the Soviet Government to avoid unnecessary bloodshed.

The case, as outlined in the article under fire, in brief, is this: A Revolution has taken place in Russary bloodshed.

As to "shaking the bloody hand of Capitalist Europe," he means the opening of trade with the capitalist powers, or rather the attempts to do so. by granting certain concessions, etc. Is this to be considered as a defeat or mistake? Let us see! Russia is backward industrially. It is a country of vast natural resources waiting to be developed. Its great. est immediate necessity is the rapid reconstruction of the transportation system. Before the war Russia imported nearly all her manufactured goods from western Europe or America. Since the Revolution, that has been cut off by the blockade, and the Russians have been compelled to depend on the meagre resources of their own industry to try and keep up with the enormous demand. But this is found to be very inadequate. So the Bolsheviki must seek trade with other countries who can supply them with such things so necessary to the feeding. clothing and sheltering of their people, which at the present stage Russia is incapable of supplying herself. If such a trade incidently gives profits to the capitalists of other countries, it solves a problem for Russia in a few years, which, if left to her own resources, would take centuries, besides strengthening the position of the workers' government by helping to build the Socialist society. Is that a defeat or mistake? No!

The paragraph mentioned above more or less contradicts the rest of J. A. McD.'s article It shows a lack of understanding of the Marxian method of thought, especially in regard to the Proletarian Revolution, in spite of the many assurances given in rhetorical phrases that he does so.

The leaders of the Russian Revolution of today gained this knowledge, not only by a persistent study of Marxism, but by taking part in the 1905 Revolution. Their mistakes have been very few. And whoever heard, or will ever hear, of a revolution without mistakes and temporary defeats, which but strengthen the revolution ultimately.

Far from being a detriment to the movement in other countries, the Russian Revolution is a glorious example to the enslaved of every land. It has demonstrated to many of us the true nature of Marrism as the philosophy of the militant workers.

No doubt there is a tendency on the part of some to "do something" now, tacticians without sufficient knowledge; but there are also lots of theorists with sufficient knowledge who lack the courage or initiative to impart it to others, or emasculate Marsism to suit the tastes of their own comfortable pos-

Indeed the need for education is very great, but I think that we will have to devise other means, more vigorous means, and tactics also, to get our propaganda before the masses. Otherwise we shall have to give way to a more virile movement. That is the lesson of the Russian Revolution.

A. McKENZIE

## McDONALD'S REPLY

Coming, as it does, from one whom I have known long and favorably in the Socialist movement and at the same time, involving a re-examination of a most popular subject, the criticism of Comrade McKenzie is, indeed, worthy of serious consideration. The rancor and irritability displayed by my criticas well as the innuendoes avent traitorous action on my part, I can mercifully condone. These imputations have no bearing whatever on the subject, and could not be substantiated even if they did.

Twice, in the course of his article, my opponent asserts that two paragraphs in 'On Copying the Bolsheviki' contradict the remainder of the contribution. No proof is offered on where these contradictions occur, and mere assertions can get us nowhere in a serious discussion.

The ease, as outlined in the article under fire, it brief, is this: A Revolution has taken place in Rus overthrowing a weak bourgeois regime and inst gurated a system of proletarian dictatorship in its stead. While the new social form is not Socialism, but dictatorship of a minority, it warrants the sup port of all revolutionists, the world over, because of its opposition to international capitalism, and the avowed intention of its leaders to establish a social system in the interests of the producers alone. That the class-conscious proletariat of other coun tries, while sympathizing with, and lending support to, the Russian workers, should recognize the fart that conditions in Russia are quite different from what they are in the industrially developed countries of western Europe and America. That these conditions warrant a method of attack that, in all probability would not be successful in the highly developed capitalist nations. That our great well pon of emancipation lies in the dissemination of Socialist knowledge amongst our fellow workers and not in recklessly indulging in the various forms of mob action that have been advanced by different parties during the past three years.

A review of the article in question will prove conclusively that this is a fair summary of the position laid down. Yet, where is the contradiction! There is none in reality. But, while I have not contradicted myself, still, for the sake of accuracy, I must contradict Comrade McKenzie.

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