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VANCOUVER, B. C., AUGUST 16, 1920

EDITORIAL

BERTRAND RUSSELL.

BERTRAND RUSSELL is a man who is described as a scholar, mathematician and philosopher, by "The Nation" (New York), in which journal, July 31, 1920, he contributes an article entitled, "Soviet Russia—1920."

As was to be expected, the article has attracted wide attention, coming as it does from a man who is not of the working-class, but who professes working-class sympathies and who has, not without ability, written several treatises upon working-class problems and policies, involving some quite capable considerations of a wide range of fundamental Socialist literature.

We do not propose to here examine the depth and extent of his understanding of what has come to be known as the "Marxist" position, though we pause a moment to say that in referring to the Marxian theory of surplus value, it would have been better to leave it alone than to have said this about it and no more: "This doctrine" (surplus value) "is very complicated and is scarcely tenable as a contribution to pure theory. It is rather to be viewed as a translation into abstract terms of the hatred with which Marx regarded the system that coins wealth out of human lives, and it is in this spirit, rather than in that of disinterested analysis, that it has been read by its admirers. A critical examination of the theory of surplus value would require much difficult and abstract discussion of pure economic theory without having much bearing upon the practical truth or falsehood of Socialism; it has therefore seemed impossible within the limits of the present volume." ("Proposed Roads to Freedom," pp. 18-19). Some other people, who may be said to have less excuse than Bertrand Russell have wisely turned aside, rather than launch any effort toward the overturning of that invulnerable doctrine, be it born of hate and therefore scientifically inconsequent, or purely disinterested, and therefore suited to the scientific niceties and congruencies of the exact science.

By all of which foregoing we do not mean to say exactly that Bertrand Russell altogether fails to recognize the strength of the Marxian position in its analysis of society as we have it today, or that he is without response to its terrific indictment of capitalism as a productive and slave system, and the consequent evils that lubricate it. But, seemingly, he is quite a passable theorist and, by his own confession, before he went to Russia he styled himself a Communist. After a month or more there, he has generated anxious and academic doubts within himself.

True to his colors, he is a pacifist, in Russia or out of it. He quite logically has extended his own analysis of capitalist development to what he terms a suitable form of Socialism, and he expected to find this suitable form in the Russia of today. He expected to find there, even if it were the first time in history, a government existing under the whole-hearted consent of the governed. He seemingly considered the dictatorship of the proletariat to be a prayerful and consultative form of stern but at the same time deferential administration. He has discovered that the dictatorship of the proletariat means just exactly that the class conscious workers, or their representatives, wield the powers of State

as they see fit in the interests of the working class, as these interests by them are judged and understood.

It is upon this point that he is in distress, and he is apparently in conflict largely with his own notions. By his own professions he wishes the realization of a form of society which, if it is not identical with that now obtaining in Russia, will approximately meet the ultimate aims of that society. But to reach that aim he neither wishes to dictate nor to suffer dictatorship. He wishes the tooth pulled without pain. He is, in fact, a "living ganglion of irreconcilable antagonisms."

The whole article is worthy of the attention it will undoubtedly receive. It contains much that will be widely misquoted. Already, Mr. Lloyd George has led the way in administering the suitable pieces to the public. Mr. Russell must now experience a mental itch in finding himself recommended by a man whose government, in 1918, was dictatorial enough to confine him in prison for the opinions he then expressed regarding the use of United States troops against the workers in that artistic cradle of the higher and intellectual activities of life, of which he is so proud and ardent a devotee—the city of Glasgow. We shall at least expect him to require of those gentlemen that which he will never in them encounter,—the "scientific disinterestedness" his mathematical mind worships but never locates. Trotsky, whom he professes to have met, once quoted Shakespeare to the effect that "the devil can quote scripture for his own purposes." So with Mr. Lloyd George. That gentleman carefully left out of his quotations the statement that with all the hostility, within and without, that the Russian Soviets have had to deal, the peasants today are better off than they ever have been, and that no one, man, woman or child was to be found in the villages who was underfed. So too did he fail to mention Mr. Russell's statement that were he a Russian he would support the present government of that country as being better than any possible alternative.

We expect next to find Peter Kropotkin quoted by some political jackanapes to the same end. Kropotkin has been persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, exiled and foully murdered in the capitalist press, by the Bolsheviki, from time to time. The labor delegates to Russian found him in vigorous good health at his home near Moscow. By Miss Margaret Bondfield, a member of that delegation, he has sent a message to the British workers, enjoining them to lend their aid to the raising of the blockade upon Russia. He adheres to his principles of Anarchist Communism, but maintains support of the Soviet government as essential in present circumstances.

So, when all is said and done, it is best that we should understand that ideal forms of society do not take shape over night. In its struggle to overturn the forces of oppression the working class will ruthlessly cast down all obstacles, whether they be erected by academic theorists or projected by the traditional enemy, the propertied class. The rule of the people must antagonize all whom it hurts. Those whom it does not hurt will not oppose it. They are the workers.

SECRETARIAL NOTES

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Comrade C. M. O'Brien says our conclusions that that he is "out" on bail twice are quite correct. He is awaiting the outcome of the jugglrepokery legalities cheerfully.

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