

# WESTERN CLARION

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## The United Front

THE new theory of the United Front would seem to imply that, diverse in objective, and divided in purpose and ideation as we are, it is still possible, in the deepening distress of worsening conditions to inspire and animate the mass of the workers with the sentiment and purpose of social revolution. The theory is comforting, and is feasibly presented in the various journals of "immediate materialisation." And it has all the backing of young enthusiasm born of modern spirit of discontent with the patent anomalies of capital in decadence.

It would be futile to deny that crowds can be moved by the fervour of passionate appeal, or that society can respond to the stimulus of organised minorities. But experience is proof that the crowd that is moved by that appeal is very potently saturated with the spirit of its objective, and history shows that society is readily responsive only to awakened consciousness of its associate interests, clearly perceived. We may argue with man or mass, but the argument is cogent only as it expresses the psychology of their thinking. And similarly society will be attracted to the magnetic minority only as that minority can express the prime necessities of the hour in the intimate associations of social objectivity. Were minorities of themselves, able to influence a society unconscious of reality, society would not, as now, swing idly to the anchors of traditional phantasies. Were mere thought electric enough to illumine the web of historical event, there would be no occasion to appeal to the opportunism of minority leadership. It is not, in reality, the "enlightened" cult of individualism that is strong to arouse and enthuse, but the collective thought of forceful conditions, thrust mordauntly home on the simple mind of common experience. Just as labor, however complex, is measured in terms of simple labor, so minority consciousness, advanced though it be, is effectively active necessarily, as it expresses the experience of its social counterpart. Society cannot be led by the nose, except in the measure of its thinking. And it is (as yet) our misfortune that the forms of its thinking, evolved from the stimulus of past historic interest is still affiliated with the class interests of privileged powers. To change that requires more than persuasion and organisation; to give it power and influence, more than sentiment and watch cries, however red.

In the present pathos of world unrest the whole historic material of society is in a whirl of flux and criticism. But the flux is generated by the unhalting process of economic development, not at all by the prowess of economic interpreters. And its criticism, urged and directed by the whole weight of the social forces of life and labor and groping in the vast vagueness of social misunderstanding, derives vigor, incentive and value, directly as it perceives the origin of our social chaos and the non-equivalence of our social standards. To probe social chaos to its fundamental causes demands knowledge for the accounting of its equivocating standards, comprehension. Not the knowledge of mere academic philosophy nor the laboriously acquired understanding of theoretical primacy (beloved of convention and formalism), but the firsthand knowledge of life in the intimate relations of daily ex-

istence; and the understanding of those relations in all their grimy garments and vicissitudes of proletarian experience. That is knowledge and understanding that cannot be thrust upon us by stealth, nor by dint of formal argument or reasoned appeal, nor yet by the tense aspirations and "wanchancy" ambitions of impatient—and impenitent—enthusiasts. It comes only as the conditions of socially changing forms, break down the hoary traditions of time; as the changing social forms disrupt and vanquish social ethics and status; as the quagmire of social existence encroaches turgid and deep on the barren conventions of class Dominion and in the gathering flood of its deliberate movement exposes and overwhelms the false and pharisaic philosophy of class "eternities."

It is precisely here, where we would expect it to be the strongest, that the formula of the united front betrays weakness. It shows itself to be but a gambler's chance with a desperate dice. It seeks through grumbling discontent to organise revolution. It claims that when crisis comes society can be opportunely herded to salvation. It seems to declare that society can be swayed in a specific direction amidst a tumult of irrelevant interests. It implies that in the snapping of old social sanctions is the probability of conscious social reconstruction. Not so. True, discontent can be organized to express its discontent. But to express the philosophy of revolution it must consciously possess the objectivity of cause and effect. That is, that the cause of its whole social misery is the effect of the capitalist ownership of its life. If it does not prove that, it can not strike at the substance of reality, but only at the ghost of the ages—its shadow. And the hypothesis of "the crisis" is just a delusion. In the modern world of capital crisis has become a permanence. And rather than organising an opportunity to salvation amidst its drab and joyless inanities, we are, rather, settling down doggedly to its endurance. Like our capitalist masters we are apparently willing to endure the haggard leanness of the now, in the hope of the lusty prosperity of tomorrow.

But that hope can never materialise. As the days drag on; as conditions grow worse; as misery assumes wider proportions; as economic restrictions embrace and crush social class divisions; as social usages fall into deeper destitute; as hope grows dim and get dimmer and life more destitute and intolerable; the driven crisis will merge into the driving mass that moves because it must. The mighty stress of world conditions will shake down the bourgeois gods of now and yesterday. They will prove their wisdom false and their oracles empty. Their failure will be plainly written in the dire agony of human experience. In the stifling of social activity; in the stagnation of social production; in the withering of social existence, the eagerness of want, and the willingness of toil, and the technique of production will be contrasted with the luxury of possession; with the abundance of material and resource, and the cheap fripperies of profit. And brought thus face to face with the essence of social relations, and with the meaning of social organisation, the unromantic fundament of property right shall become plainly apparent. Being apparent, society as a whole will scorn its ethic and pre-

tension, as now it scorns the pretensions of the past. And it will, at the same time, clearly perceive the significance of the voice in the wilderness: that capitalist right in the means of human life is the prime cause of social destitution and the greatest progenitor of social evil. With that recognition,—not in the dissolution of social sanctions, is not only the probability of conscious social reconstruction, but its inevitable necessity.

Thus the appeal of the United Front loses potency as a material reality. We cannot force diverse purpose into the firm unity of common aim. We must first want the object of our activities. If the want is not common, its means will not mature. And if, in all the present criticism of men and mode, of means and aim, there is no appearance of plan or method, it is simply because, in the flowing of social change in the means, methods and objects of human life, the new psychology of the hour is not yet adapted to the unfathomed vicissitudes of the change. The fact that such criticism and such dissatisfaction exists is but a symptom of the running tide of development. For the multiplication of sect and party, and the unfertility of their appeals, is an indication that the body politic is losing its centralisation of authority; that staunch as it may appear it is no more regarded as the sceptre of social unity and utility; but on the contrary has become suspect and unprogressive, and is inwardly disintegrating before the gathering weight of social purpose and social necessity.

That is, indeed, the process of social revolution. Social revolution—as it is now understood and in the particular relations of world conditions—is international and must be achieved internationally. It is the awakening of the world's proletariat from the hypnotic suggestions of political prosperity. That is one precise lesson of the Russian upheaval. Another is, that only clear comprehension of social relationships can give us the desired solidity of social purpose requisite to face the stern issue of the final struggle for power. But the awakening of the world's proletariat is neither the work of institutions, organisations, nor enthusiastic orators, but is primarily the development of the world's resources to their fullest capacity under the economic of established society. With that development proceeds the development of its Psychological reflex, until the latter, under the impetus of economic failure, is compelled to probe beyond the confines of authoritative doctrines and social superstitions, and discover the true source of its social evils, its economic miseries and fettered capacities, in the fundamental organisation of society itself—private property in the common, social means of life.

Mere organization is not sufficient to compass success. In fact many hinder it. Economic organization—which is all that labor associations are—presupposes economic relations, they are the developed consequents of those relations, and until those relations have quite plainly demonstrated their social inefficiency—that is, their failure to secure and conserve social existence which is the purpose of social organisation—a purely revolutionary organisation, at once practical and effective, is not only prevented by the very terms of the proposition.

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