

The Farmers' Forum

IN giving an opinion of the value of the farmers' platform to the farmers themselves, I do not expect to add fuel to the flame of enthusiasm which that document has excited in some quarters, but in the hope that it may set some farmers thinking along broader channels than they have hitherto. I propose to deal first with Section 3, wherein the basis of the "New National Policy" is explained, namely—lower tariff.

It is quite true that a protective tariff tends towards high prices on all those commodities which cannot be produced as cheaply in Canada as they can, at a given time, be produced elsewhere and transported to Canada. It is also true that a reduction of the tariff would tend to reduce the price of such commodities. It must be remembered, however, that with a lowering of the tariff, a greater demand must occur for such goods; a greater demand means a tendency to higher prices, so we see, that not all the amount of the tariff could be retained, even temporarily by the buyer of imported goods from which the tariff had been removed.

Let us grant then, that a lowering, or removal of the tariff on imported goods, will lower prices. It is on this ground that an appeal is being made for the support of the wage earner.

Whether we want to see it or not, the fact remains that the buyer of a commodity wants to buy as cheaply as possible, and the buyer of labor-power is no exception to the rule. If it costs less to produce labor-power, in other words, if it costs less for the worker—the seller of labor-power—to live, the competition of the workers for jobs will determine that they sell cheaper, so cheapness breeds cheapness, and allows nastiness to flourish.

In previous communications, I have tried to show that the average farmer's poverty is the direct result of an over supply of wage earners on the world's market, part of which, flooding the farmer's field of production, causes over-supply of farm produce, consequent cheapness, and poverty for the farmer.

It will readily be seen, that if goods are being produced in Canada under a protective tariff, that could be more cheaply produced elsewhere and transported to Canada, in other words, if labor is being wasted, there are more people being employed than there otherwise would be—result: less unemployed, fewer embryo farmers taking up homesteads, less farm produce, and higher prices for the farmer.

On the other hand, if all agricultural implements be placed on the free list, as is provided under "Definite Tariff Demands," sub-section (e), the wage workers will be able to enter into competition with even greater ease than at present—result: a greater influx to the farming industry than before, a greater volume of farm produce and consequent reduction in price, which assuredly would counteract any benefits which would accrue from cheaper implements, etc.

But, says my fellow farmer, what are we to do? We realize that the capitalist class is our enemy. We know the tricks they practice to prevent us enjoying even the temporary "rises" in the fluctuations of the market. We realize that we must take political action. If the reduction in the tariff that we have been wanting so long is no good to us, what is?

My answer is: If you know that the capitalist class is your enemy, make common cause with the other enemies of that class, i.e., the wage workers of the mills, railways, factories, and mines. The ballot, in spite of its limitations, has still the power to express your will if you are sure of what you want.

Your poverty is the result of the development of the forces of production. The present owners of the means of wealth production are powerless to direct those means, for the satisfaction of the needs of mankind. Profit is their God. People may starve by the million, by the thousands, and hundreds of thousands. They may walk the streets, willing, and anxious to produce the necessities of life for themselves and others, but denied the right, by those

who own the means of wealth production that labor alone has created from resources which nature has provided.

Section 6 of your Platform says in part: "We . . . recommend the adoption of the principle of co-operation as the guiding spirit in future relations between employer and employees, between capital and labor."

Why have you organized, if not to fight the trusts and combines? Why have you "gone into politics," except to carry on that fight with what you hope is an improved weapon? Yet you "recommend" that another enemy of the trusts and combines co-operate with their exploiters, with their enemy—presumably against yourself. Why do you want to strengthen your enemy, as would result if your recommendation could be acted upon? As it is the "recommendation" only shows how ignorant those who drafted the platform are of the irreconcilable conflict which exists between the capitalists class and the working class—because one is the exploiter, and the other the exploited—and serves to show to the "industrial" worker that he cannot trust them.

Do you wonder that I say your platform; that many of us farmers will have nothing to do with your platform, because we have a better one, which calls for co-operation between worker and worker, between farmers, brain and manual workers, in short—co-operation between all the workers, for the purpose of supplying the needs of all the workers, and for the elimination of the "drones"?

Are you again going to vote into power, and give a free hand for a number of years, to men, over whom you have no control, on a platform which is largely composed of recommendations, which can easily be wriggled out of, and which contains a breadth and vagueness that can be made to cover almost anything?

Some of us would rather take a part, no matter how insignificant, in the world-wide movement for the reorganization of industry on the basis of "production for use instead of for profit."

Space forbids more at present.

H. F. S.

Labor Defence Fund

Send all money and make all cheques payable to A. S. Wells, B. C. Federationist, Labor Temple, Vancouver, B. C.

Collection agency for Alberta: A. Broatch, 1203 Eighth Avenue East, Calgary, Alta.

Central Collection Agency: J. Law, Secretary, Defence Fund, Room 1, 530 Main Street, Winnipeg, Man.

Winnipeg News

The Manitoba Court of Appeal in a judgment of January 19th, dismissed the appeal entered by the defense in the R. B. Russell case against the conviction and the sentence passed by Mr. Justice Metcalfe and jury. The decision was unanimous and the defense will be unable to carry the fight to the Supreme Court of Canada on that account. The case will be taken to the Privy Council to determine the standing of trades unions in Canada and incidentally to determine the guilt of Russell, according to formal announcement by J. Law, secretary of the Labor Defence League.

A Reminder

In "The Confederate," (Brandon) of January 16th, there appears a contribution culled from "The Indicator," of October 25th, 1918. The article in question is "A Consideration of the term 'Capital,'" by "Geordie." We don't wonder at them reprinting the article: anybody would and everybody should, but the name of the paper should also be quoted.

Changing Ideas

The first step towards a comprehensive treatment of what is now known as the Materialistic Conception of History appeared in "The Poverty of Philosophy," a book written by Karl Marx in 1847, in answer to "The Philosophy of Poverty," by Proudhon. Some months later appeared the "Communist Manifesto," from the pens of Marx and Engels jointly. Before the publication of either of these works, however, Engels had worked out the theory to some extent independently, as is shewn in his "The Condition of the Working Class in England," which he wrote at the age of 23, and before his acquaintance with Marx had formed.

The Materialist Interpretation of History is a phrase closely identified with the names of Marx and Engels, and some outline of the connecting links with past materialist considerations is given by Frederick Engels in "Socialism, Utopian and Scientific," the introduction to which is an admirable and scholarly treatise upon Historical Materialism.

From a consideration of phenomena as given by the Marxian school, we find that material conditions, being the limits to our observation, our ideas must be of material objects and affairs. We find that our ideas change, therefore, as these objects and their relationships change.

For instance, the ideas prevailing under Feudalism among the workers must necessarily have been very different from those among the factory workers of the present time. Man's thoughts and conceptions are subject to change, and the change is effected accordingly as he meets the changing conditions and problems of daily life.

The determining factors are the material conditions of production, and these, in which we take cognizance of factors such as geographical, climatic, racial and so on, are subject to change. Factories installed with machinery equipped to cope with the needs of production of a given period of time are, through the development of general market conditions and the development of machinery itself, rendered out of date, and what (generally) results in a cheaper method of production takes its place.

We see around us daily the worker who was but yesterday considered a skilled mechanic, thrown out of his habitual groove through the development of machinery. The effort to make a living for himself and family is therefore the first consideration of the worker; interrupt that or change the manner of that effort, and you change the whole course of existence for him. When the worker takes thought of changing conditions and forms some understanding of his own position in relation to society generally, he will more readily understand the important bearing they have on his ideas and general course of action.

Evidence of thought upon and consideration of his surroundings is shewn everywhere by the worker of today. The educational institutions and the press and pulpit no longer represent to him the facts and experiences of his daily life. He is commencing to criticize and question those spokesmen and apologists operating in the interests of another class, a class to which belongs his master, and in whose interest those institutions are maintained.

F. A. E.

Clarion Maintenance Fund

Lettish Local No. 58	\$ 5.00
Dick Burge	1.00
O. Larson	2.00
J. Richards	1.00
F. J. McNey	5.00
John Nelson	.50
W. & A. Scott	4.00
H. C. Mitchell	1.55

Total to 27th January \$20.05