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Creative Revolution

A Study in Communist Ergotocracy*

In spite of the forbidding character of the title page, we can read this book without getting beyond our depth oftener than is usual in these days of revolutions and revision. Issued by the Plebs League, in paper covers, we have a foreword by the "Plebs" that betrays the prevalent apprehension of fatalism which today haunts the entire school of Marxian thought. The dread that determinism might be confused with fatalism is gradually clearing the ground, or fertilizing it rather, for a re-growth of the doctrine of Free Will: a poor thing flung by philosophy like Hagar's offspring into the wilderness because of moral testiness and doubtful parentage.

Almost any Socialist book published today exhibits this grave concern, and finds in Bergson, James, and such like bourgeois apologists some factors necessary to the modernizing of Marx.

Ergotocracy is derived from the Greek words, Ergates—worker; and Kratia—to rule; worker's rule. It might be suggested that such a study is somewhat in advance of the times, or that at least Russia affords the only opportunity for profitable study of the subject suggested, but the desire of our authors is not so much to discover what has been done in Russia, as what might be done elsewhere.

Many of the subjects discussed are such that formerly held but little interest for the Socialist movement in Canada, but of late, signs indicate that at last we are to have our share of Fabianism and Laborism. Blatchford, Scheideman, and their attendant right and left wingism. The earlier chapters deal with such subjects. To "Clarion" readers these questions have at best an historical interest only.

The shop stewards' movement (we read on page 67 to 69) is considered revolutionary. "It will once and for all abolish the rule of those who live by ownership, and will substitute for the dominion—the rule or rather the administration of those who live by labor; that it will replace bourgeois democracy by Communist ergotocracy." Such, we are told, is the conviction of the Marxists in the movement, also that: "Convinced as they are that economic power is the basis of political power, they are equally convinced that the shop-stewards' movement is the germ of the means whereby the growing economic power of the workers will secure political expression." Some "pregnant sentences" (our authors' phrase) are taken from a pamphlet called "Direct Action." We select two of these: "As the industrial and Social organization grow strong enough it will be forced to fight the Capitalist State—not to take possession of it but to abolish it. The joint social and industrial committee would then have to assume many of the functions of the State during the period of transition."

Aside from the very revolutionary and entirely impossible determination to smash a social institution like the modern State, it seems a pity to proceed to such extreme measures when the State still has many functions to perform. At best all we can hope to do, however revolutionary be our "urge," is to change its name.

"Parliamentary democracy" is to be left to those who still have faith in it; co-operation is but as a

pea-shooter compared to a maxim gun; "in retrospect the shop stewards' movement may come to be regarded as the instrument of the twentieth century revolution, the revolution which inaugurates ergotocracy." This is not to be assumed as anti-political, but anti-parliamentarian.

The new movement is a class movement, not of craft, not even of industry as proclaimed by indus-

efficiently than at present, if not, good night. "The capitalist State will remain in being, and the control of industry by the workers' committee will prove to have been nothing more than a breath on the face at the waters." But the revolution must be ripe or "the workers cannot fulfill their historic mission," and the appraising feature of ripeness will be "the manner in which the active protagonists comport themselves in view of the needs of the hour." Thus, in short, the shop stewards' movement—now alas seeking jobs which are at present not in evidence, aside from the Bergsonian "vital impulses" all embodied in the propaganda of the Industrial Workers of the World, and all built upon great expectations.

In discussing the "Significance of the Great War" (chapter 5) we are unable to discern the "large measure of truth" our authors see in Boudin's pronouncement that "Textiles mean peace; iron and steel—war."

We cannot find any evidence of peace in history since man enslaved his fellow man. And surely the days of King Cotton were stricken enough.

This chapter is somewhat disappointing and clearly shows ignorance of its Caption. It has plenty of quotations, one from Rosa Luxemburg's "Revolutionary Socialism in Action" which we quote with entire approval. "The masses must learn to use power by using power." But this is not in our opinion Bergsonian though our authors designate it as such.

Chapter six on "the Russian Revolution" is not more edifying. Concerning the statement that the consummation of the British bourgeois revolution required the years between 1509 and 1918 to be effected we are inclined to claim Missouri as our birthplace, particularly when we are told in the next breath that the French revolution ended in 1875.

The statements however are apologies for daring to appraise the Russian Revolution, and for expressing the hope and the belief that the world revolution will be effected "in our lifetime, perhaps in the near future."

But that should not prompt us to assume the future historian will look upon the Russian Revolution of 1917 "as the inception of the world revolution."

That might be ergotocratic but it certainly is not Marxian.

Will the Revolution of 1905, the Paris Commune 1871, the inspiring days of 1848 be ignored by our hypothetical future historian in estimating the world revolution? We think not.

At times we feel inclined to invite our Communist friends to read this book, but when we read such sentences as this, we feel they might resent and misconstrue our good offices; page 100. "We realize that the teachings of Tolstoy, in conjunction with the experience of intolerable hardships and the reaction against unnamable horrors, were the chief immediate causes of the Tsarist regime." Setting aside Tolstoy, no one can deny that the unbearable misery of the Russian working class in Petrograd during the

* Creative Revolution: A Study in Communist Ergotocracy. By Edden and Cedar Paul. 224 pp. The Plebs League, 11a Penvern Road, London.

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trial unionism, but of the working group,—of a class. "It is by class-conscious organizations able to carry on production that the workers can secure control of industry, expropriate the 'owners' and bring about the social revolution." Capitalism will not fall merely from post-war troubles, nor failure to secure markets, but largely from "the vital impulses" (enter Bergson) "of the bulk of the workers who even in such a land as our own—are showing greater and greater unwillingness to continue running the productive machine in the interest of the ruling class." The workers, however, must be able to run things when they seize control, even more