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## Joseph and His Brethern

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

The Labour Theory of Value in Karl Marx. By H. W. B. ph. Fellow and Tutor of New College, Oxford. Outord University Press. 4s. 6d.

HEY do not improve, these Marx critics. They're getting worse. Comes now Mr. Joseph of Oxford and I have wasted these two evenings grubbing in his particular midden and have become effectually bemerded and positively put out. One could, of course, have recourse to the vocabulary of Skatology, say what should be said and be done with it. But the "mot de Cambronne," however satisfying and, at times, effective it may be, is not argument and does not fill - space. An sunce of civit, good apothecary. As the late King, David once remarked, one does well to be angry once in a while and I freely confess that this fellow annoys me. There are Marx critics that one can enjoy reading and I could have almost forgiven this one if he had given expression to one generous thought or, what would be too much to expect, given any indication that he knew he was snapping the heels of a man immeasurably greater than

ears that My Joseph is of opinion that th Marxian Theory of Value "has been rejected and refuted by others" and avows that his critique is not intended to "slay the slain" (p. 17). However, whether or not he thinks he can improve on the slaying process it is evident that previous killings have not been very effective since he finds that "its actual hold on the minds of great masses of men is very strong, and that it does not a little to embitter their thoughts." (p. 15). It is also significant that he finds that "it makes their justified resentment at the working of the economic order take the form of denouncing one definite alleged injustice:" a vague, indefinite discontent can always be countered by just such sophistical nihilism as constitutes so much of this book.

"It is perhaps true," says our author, "that there are three outstanding elements in Karl Marx's teaching. One is the economic interpretation of history . . one is his analysis of the actual course and growth of modern capitalistic industry. . . . The third is his theory of value. . . With the first two of these doctrines this book is not concerned. (p.7).

It is hardly necessary for me to say that, while

## By "GEORDIE"

quite in accordance with the facts and that he was at considerable pains to shew that prices did not, and could not as a general rule, conform to Values. All this I have already treated exhaustively elsewhere

As to surplus value Mr. Joseph alleges that according to Marx a capitalist makes his profit by paying his workmen less than the real value of their labor (p. 23), , Here lies the fundamental injustice of the capitalist system. An exchange is only just when the things exchanged embody equal amounts of human labor. When for what embodies so many hours of human labor that is given which embodies fewer hours of it, the exchange is unjust. There are doubtless many other unjust exchanges, but the constant all-pervasive form of it in a capitalist society is in wage-payment. The employer takes from the wage-earner, in the materials on which the wage-earner works, more labor, and so more value, than he gives him in his wage or the commodities to which it is equivalent. Thus he amasses surplusvalue; he becomes richer injustly by mere exonge." (p. 48) - 9 the state of the s

Now, these statements, considered as an expression of the teachings of Marx, are very defective. It seems incredible that anyone could possibly have read a chapter of Marx and remain ignorant of the distinction between labor and labor-power. This is the more inexcusable as this distinction is not merely verbal or conceptual but is physical and objective. In any case, if this differentiation is not made, the theory of surplus-value can not be stated.

In the second place, these statements err fundamentally and are completely vitiated by the importtation of the idea of justice into the proposition. Marx could not possibly have said what is here attributed to him. And if, as I have already observed. Mr. Joseph had tried to understand the question as whole, he would have seen this. The category surplus-value is a fact of the capitalist system; so is the concept of "justice" engendered by the system. The wage contract and the exploitation which it implies are therefore just and equitable within the limits of that system and so long as the same is played according to the rules.

"The literature of protest against Marxism is already vast, yet, with the notable exception of such writings as those of Bohm-Bawerk, Seligman, Sombart and Stammlar, who have dealt with special aspects of the system, the bulk of that literature proves conclusively to the well-informed reader that reason is but a fig-leaf for emotion. Too obvious in most instances is the critic's desire to emulate St. George and stay the dragon, even if personal modesty clothes the brave onslaught in the humble garb of scientific research. With these critics emotions run riot. They have in their zeal attempted the impossible; to kill the dragon without seeing him. That even St.George could not have done. Such criticism, carried on for two generations, has naturally established a tradition: a man of straw has been constructed for the express use of Marx's critics.

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Of the current misconceptions of the Marxian system, the most fundamental and most general is the opinion that the labor-theory of value is the corner-stone of Warsian socialism. From this is derived the equally erroneous opinion that Marx's demand for social justice stands or falls with his theory of value. . . This ethical interpretation of the Marxian theory of value and the desire to base socialism upon this theory are characteristic of the bulk of the academic literature about Marx. . . By making an sthical labor-theory of value the spring and confer of Marxian socialism, one thereby wipes out the difference betwen the sentimental, utopian socialism of the first half of the last century and modern so called ech Most of the academic writers have attributed to Marxian theory precisely this sentimental character, but without drawing the logical conclusion. . . Whatever the faults and merits of Marx's theory of value may be, it was not intended as an ethical basis for socialism, but as a means of interpreting economic phenomena. It is quite true that his theory of value is the central theory upon which his economic analysis of the capitalistic system rests,-in short, the foundation of his economic doctrine; but this theory plays no part whatsoever in his socialistic doctrine. which purports to be nothing more than a demonstration that socialism is inevitable. . . . How then did it happen that it was the theory of surplus value that primarily drew the fire of the learned economists; and why did most of them seem to think that in disproving that theory they had delivered a mortal blow to modern socialism? First of all, perhaps, because certain socialist agitators tried to make emotional capital out of the theory of surplus value. This circumstance cannot, however, serve as an excuse for scholars who have undertaken to criticize Marxian socialism. Even if they deemed it unnecessary to study Marx's own writings, they could have learned from many a propagandist leaflet what part the theory of surplus value actually plays in the Marxian system. Secondlyand this probably furnishes in most cases the truer explanation of their misconceptions they were not sufficiently impressed by the peculiarities of Marxian socialism to be disposed to draw a sharp line between the socialism of Marx and the socialism of his predecessors. It seemed to them, probably, like making two bites of a cherry: socialism is socialism, and its variations are but differences in shade. All pre-Marxian socialism was distinctly ethical; every peroration against capitalism contained or implied an appeal for social justice. Whenever the word "exploitation" was used, they accordingly thought themselves justified in looking for the usual end of the sermon. When Marx, in his Capital, describes the development of the English factory system, he does not mince matters. He makes the respectable English Blue-books, to use Bernard Shaw's phrase, convict capital "of wholesale spoilation, murder and compulsory prostitution; of plague, pestilence and famine; of battle, murder and sudden death." The citation of those deplorable facts and the energy of Marr's language struck some gentle scientific souls as an appeal for socialism. Add the circumstance that the first part of Marx's bulky volume was devoted to the elaboration of his theory of surplus value-a theory anything but complimentary to the capitalistic organization of societyand how could there be any doubt that Marx's doctrine is an ethical appeal for justice, and that the theory of value is its foundation? And if the Marxian theory of value he (Continued on page 4)

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Mr. Joseph accepts, in its "broad" sense, the "econ omic interpretation" of history, this is where he gets off on the wrong foot right at the start. The Marxion doctrine can only be understood and must be stadied as a comprehensive whole. See, besides the "orthodox" authorities. Veblen in "The Place of Science" on this point.

Mr. Joseph also finds that Marx "identifies exchange-value with value simply," (p. 34); that Mary holds that "the value of commodities depends on the amount of socially-necessary labor embodied in them" (p. 44), "that the exchange-relations of incorporated in them" (p. 56) and that, in ofte of all this. Marx "admits" that commodities a not exchange in accordance with the relative

The fair is only necessary to say that Marx was enough to distinguish Value and exchange-the that his theory of exchange-value or Price is

In consideration of all this I am, therefore, absolved from following our author into all the absurd conclusions that he draws from these erroneous find-ings of his. Mr. Joseph has not improved upon his predecessors in this field, indeed, it would be correct to say that he is merely a belated survivor of a once flourishing industry now almost extinct.

Several years ago one Vladimir G. Simkhovitch, professor in Columbia University, a man of wide reading and singularly well-equipped, essayed this same task and, incidentally, took occasion to slam his brother critics. It is no accident that in the photograph he gives of them he should have managed to give, in advance, an accurate picture of our friend Joseph. The following quotations are from his book "Marxism versus Socialism" which is not only readable but worth reading. Of course this same Simkhovitch-slips up kimself on quite a numher af points but that does not detract from what he says in this connection.