

Western Clarion

A Journal of History, Economics, Philosophy,
and Current Events.

Published twice a month by the Socialist Party of
Canada, P. O. Box 710, Vancouver, B. C.
Entered at G. P. O. as a newspaper.

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VANCOUVER, B. C., NOVEMBER 16, 1922.

WINTER STUDY TIME.

It would appear to be obvious that as there is a recognized antagonism between wage worker and master in the field of production, that antagonism must find recognition and must manifest itself in the body of thought in the community at large. It would seem that since in the workshop the wage worker is in constant dispute with his master over rates of pay, hours of labor, protective devices and so forth, and has come to distrust the workshop viewpoint of the employing class, he would readily get to the bottom of that viewpoint on the outside. But it is not so, and because it is not so, or because it is insufficiently so, the S. P. of C. study classes in history and economics are promoted. If the employing class bring their resources to bear in suppressing workshop aspiration toward material betterment in any sense, it is reasonable to suppose that they will also order to the same end all the agencies at their command in the educational field, or in any or all of the avenues of instruction, news information or general institutional administration. We know that they do, for instance in school and college, press, pulpit and in the political arena. The worker's viewpoint, considered in relation to these institutions, is still the viewpoint of his master and it is the chief among their functions to keep it so. The aim of our educational efforts, therefore, is to uncover an altogether different viewpoint than that which expresses harmony and identity of interest and ideas between wage worker and master. Our aim in education is to find the fundamental class antagonism that exists, to be able to recognize it, to understand how it arose and to find its solution.

Education—the word itself—appears to be something formidable to the average worker. He is not yet familiar with the course of education as presented by the socialist. A first acquaintance with that course brings out, as a general rule, all the antagonism and conflict of the preconceptions and prejudices set in his mind and fostered by the agencies we have already referred to. He discovers that, particularly concerning such like matters as religion and patriotism, his ideas and our explanations are far apart. As his study and observation proceed, and his understanding and knowledge develop, his attention is devoted to the realism of life and the observable facts of his everyday experience are recognized and accounted in the order of his ideas. God, king and country, the “ever was and ever shall be” ideas of religious supernaturalism give place to the idea and understanding of social change in society's development, and the supremacy of man in harnessing to his use the forces of nature as a gradual and unfolding process. Reliance upon the superior man, the great man, charged with ideas supposedly self-conceived, gives way under an acquaintance with the historical process of development to the appreciation of the influence of social forces, broadly considered, in influencing change and moulding the characters in whom it finds its advocates.

Thus, a consideration of the facts of life in present day society at once directs our attention to the past. It is obviously true that present day society, considered in relation to the manner of its wealth production and distribution, performs that function insufficiently well to satisfy the needs of the com-

munity as a whole. It is a fact apparent that the working class position is subjective, that its condition is miserable at the best of times, employed or unemployed. At the present time, the “system” itself (so-called) functions only in such a manner as to manifest its own weaknesses. Thus our new student, interested very likely in the condition of the members of the working class as these weaknesses affect them, will find himself at once, through the pressure of present events, thrown into a consideration of the past. The process of accounting for capitalist and wage worker will of necessity bring to his attention patrician and plebian, chattel slave and feudal lord, the day of serfdom, of guild masters and journeymen, of propertyless and property-owning, the historical background of proletarian and bourgeoisie.

Only by establishing the connecting thread between past and present will present events be understood. The weakening structure of bourgeois society appears now to be beyond repair, otherwise, that is, than beyond argumentative repair. The hollow speeches of the “great men” representative of the present ruling interests in the British elections are devoted entirely to a defence of capitalist administration. If there is a ruling class confidence today it is surely inspired by working class ignorance. Positively nothing else can explain, not only working class approval of their point of view, but the confidence of their own impudent, audacious and barefaced lying in support of it. In support of their property right it is no doubt natural that the master class, through their spokesmen, should present this as “the best of all possible worlds,” “our country and our empire,” of course, being the most favored areas contained in it. Mr. Lloyd George, for instance, a political porch climber of considerable skill and repute, in support of capitalist property right in the essential means of social wealth production portrays acquisitiveness as this property instinct, an inherent and deep rooted quality in human nature. That is to say, in actual fact, this instinct is satisfied in but a very small proportion of the population (the capitalist class) at the expense—forever and all time, we are to suppose—of the greater proportion (the working class). This nice, innocent, natural and harmless instinct which supposedly expresses itself in the washwoman's half crown in savings is presented to cover the greed, covetousness and hoggish indecency of what we know as the capitalist class, rulers of what we are to consider as a natural order. Their property right is to be “let alone,” as a natural right. There is an instinct of which these apologists prate not quite so much—on their own behalf—the creative, or constructive instinct which, in the social sense, is expressed in the fields, factories and workshops of social production, and is monopolized entirely by the workingclass. In the eyes of our capitalist it is the outstanding virtue of the worker that he actively exercise this latter instinct. How else could the capitalist property instinct find satisfaction?

This is perhaps a digression from the course of our discussion, but it is illustrative of the flimsy apologetics of the defenders of capitalism, the substance of which is, concerning property right as a subject under general enquiry nowadays, that the working class have a “right” to property, but if they have none—and it is agreed that they have none—that is simply incidental!

The hold of the ruling class on their system loses its grip proportionately with the inability of that system to furnish the means of procuring a livelihood to its workers. If the process of production cannot smoothly continue, the maintenance of the workers devolves in some fashion upon the rulers of society. The workers themselves have no surplus. The system is brought to the point where the production process is seriously out of gear. It is usual for the working class to attend to the material wants of society at large; if the rulers are now to attend from their store to the feeding of the workers, the whole structure of the capitalist order is challenged and thus we have the present tendency toward enquiry into its fundamental principles, and the consequent tissue of more or less convenient accomoda-

tions mouthed by Lloyd George & Co., with their usual hard faced attitude, amid a welter of such general community miseries as should welcome a universal and wholesome proletarian damnation.

It would appear that we are educators with a prejudice. Well, we deal with matters of fact. We are appreciative of the circumstances surrounding us and of the trend of events. We make no false pretensions. Such theories or interpretations as we harbor are useless to us if we cannot find their corroboration in the world of reality. Such a matter, for instance, as the identity of interest between employer and employee is clearly disproved in the everyday experiences of employer and employee. Our student will find in economics the theoretical expression of the fact. There is no desire and no need to add color to it.

Our new student may find education to be unattractive and to contain no pleasurable appeal, although we hope not. He may be a good observer whose contact with the multiplicity of events has impressed him as being sufficient for his understanding, in keeping with his needs as a rule-of-thumb, practical man. Our educational courses will prove interesting to him. They are certain to be useful. He may present the common excuses that he cannot with confidence master the terrible words. Certainly he will find all sorts of excuses for indolence if he sets out to look for them. He may already have sagacity and no “learning”, or he may have some learning and little sagacity. In any case, he will most readily appreciate and understand a treatment of those things he already has a practical acquaintance with.

His class-room skill will eventually parallel his skill in the workshop and, unlike the uses to which his workshop skill is devoted—the profit of his master—his class-room skill he will be able to bring to his own use and the use of his class.

SECRETARIAL NOTES.

COMRADE LESTOR reports good meetings already held in Alberta at Trochu, Swallow, Collingwood and Aberdeen. Carbon was unfortunately missed through his misunderstanding of the arrangements, aided by a slight attack of sickness on Comrade Lestor's part. He reports bankruptcy on the part of the farmers in the sense of financial health, but he records, nevertheless, and asks us to extend appreciation of the hospitality extended to him all round. Other meetings to be held in Alberta beyond the schedule given in our last issue, are:—Decr. 5. City Hall, Medicine Hat. Decr. 6. Seven Persons. Decr. 7. Whitla. Decr. 8. New Dale School. Decr. 9. Winnifred. Decr. 10. City Hall, Medicine Hat. Decr. 11. Thompson. Decr. 12. Many Berries.

The comrades in those districts will, we hope, bring to the meetings as many of their friends as they can induce to come.

Calgary reports the resumption of class study work with the oncoming of the hard weather. Two or three weeks will see the Comrades there back to their usual winter activity with the usual good educational results.

We regret that the “Clarion Mail Bag” feature is crowded out this issue through pressure on space and last minute hurry. This, however, will allow for a wider treatment in next issue.

VANCOUVER, B. C.

Western Clarion office and D. E. C. address, 1305 Tower Building, 500 Beatty St., Vancouver, B. C. address all mail matter to P. O. Box 710.

Local (Vancouver) No. 1. Headquarters address, Rooms 11 and 12 Flack Block, 163 Hastings Street, West, Vancouver, B. C. Business meetings every Tuesday, 8 p.m. History Class every Thursday, 8 p.m. (Present textbook, “Socialism, Utopian and Scientific”). Economics class, every Sunday at 3 p.m. (Present text book, “Wage-Labor and Capital”). Propaganda meetings every Sunday, 8 p.m., Star Theatre, Main Street. Every encouragement is offered to new students in class work, and every effort should be made, and the invitation is here extended, to bring as many workers as possible to attendance.

CLARION MAINTENANCE FUND.

Following \$1 each:—J. Mitchell, C. Bright, A. M. Davis, Mrs. Annie Ross, J. G. Brown.

Norman McAulay \$2; John F. Maguire \$2; B. H. L. \$5; Local Ottawa (per Peter T. Leckie) \$3.50. Comrades of St. John, N. B., (per M. Goulie) \$12.50.

Above, C. M. F. receipts, 27 Oct. to 14 Nov., inclusive, total \$30.