

The S. P. of C. and the Third International

Editor's Note.—The following article by Comrade C. Stephenson, which we have had on hand more than a month, is too lengthy to conform to the ruling of the D. E. C., which confines this discussion to one page each issue. This issue, therefore, contains the first part of the article. The second part will be included in next issue.

IN adding my contribution to the discussion on affiliation with the Third International, I shall confine myself to a survey of the social situation in Canada, which situation, as I see it, furnishes the main grounds of my opposition to affiliation.

I am impelled to a sober and, as far as space will allow, a detailed consideration of the factors in the Canadian situation, first, because Marxian science imposes that obligation, and, secondly, because so far, I think, a detailed consideration of those factors has not been presented in the discussion. It is always in order to point out that the method of modern science, which is the essence of Marxism, is to go to facts, things, objective conditions outside the mind, for knowledge; and it was just an adherence to this method that constituted the revolt of the Marxian school of Scientific Socialism against the subjective, schematic idealism of the Utopian Socialists, and for the repudiation, by Marx and his co-workers, of Bakunin and such other "actionists" and their emotional following.

In reading the terms of affiliation I get the impression, both by their general tone and by specific passages, that the formulatores had in mind social situations where a state of civil war exists or where it is immediately imminent between the working class and the bourgeoisie. Also I get an impression of the Executive Committee as a General Staff marshalling revolutionary forces in the field of action. However that may be, I count it folly and to the disadvantage of the movement for an E. C., while sitting so far away from the scenes of political activity in all parts of the world, to lay down set regulations to cover widely varying social situations. I will not go further into that matter, but will proceed to consider whether a war-like or near war-like state of things exists within the Canadian situation.

As a forecast of the lines of my discussion I shall put, what seems to me, the following pertinent questions:—

First: How is the population of Canada, as a whole, disposed towards the economic programme of Communism, i.e., to the abolition of private ownership of land, natural resources, mills, mines, factories, means of transportation and distribution, etc., and to the setting up in its place, the common ownership of those material means of production and distribution; and also, how is the population disposed towards the political programme of Communism, i.e., the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" for enforcing the economic programme?

Second: How are specific sections of the population disposed toward those programmes and what is their standing to each other in point of numbers and material and spiritual resources?

Third: What percentage of the population at present accept the Communist position?

Fourth: What are the tendencies in the situation in Canada in respect of the revolutionary communist programme?

These questions, of course, can be answered only approximately, and in the end, according to each individual's personal judgment. This article does not pretend to cover the whole field opened up by them. Mainly, besides stating my own views, it is an attempt to call attention to certain factors, the consideration of which may assist readers to a decision.

It will, I think, be known to most readers that Socialism has made its greatest progress among what is termed the industrial or machine proletariat and least progress among the small farming peasantry, and the business callings. Outward from the machine proletariat through intermediate occupational groups, at each remove from the influence of the machine technology the members of the groups are found less and less susceptible to Socialist ideas, and to come more and more under the domination of business principles of profit-seeking by means of competitive advantages gained through the buy-

ing and selling of property, until is reached at the farthest remove the peasant and the business groups who are notoriously reactionary to the point of antagonism.

An extended account of how these groups come to be predisposed for or against Socialist ideas is beyond the scope of this article, but for my purpose, something must be said upon it. Suffice it to say then, that such various predispositions are only in small degree the result of reasoned conviction such as comes from a consideration of economic interest, but are largely, unconsciously acquired habits of mind. Such habits of mind, or mental prepossessions, result from the disciplinary effect of habits of life enforced, in part, by the general method of production, and in part by a particular occupation. To illustrate, in technologically backward communities, production is carried on, on an individual scale. The farmer owns his own tools, implements and stock, and often buildings and land, and only occasionally does he need the help of other men. He is an individual producer owning the products of his labor, which he trades or sells on the market. Habits of life formed in accordance with individual production, ownership of property and the manipulation of it for purposes of personal gain induce habits of thought which make up that complex of ideas and standards of judgment known as the individualistic point of view. The peasantry moreover, are not generally forced, by industrial crises into a critical attitude towards the present economic organization of society, as are the industrial proletariat, having some reserves against hard times, in products raised for home consumption. Also, in such technologically backward communities the play of natural forces are not fully understood; there are gaps in the productive process so far as matter-of-fact knowledge is concerned and guess-work fills the gap, and often with the supernatural. The peasantry as is well known, are the most religious as well as the most

MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY (Continued from page 5)

set above the town. This condition encouraged the growth of the absolute monarchy which was in close touch with the trading interests against the feudal lords, until it became a hindrance and resulted in the execution of Charles I., after six years of strife and civil war from 1642 to 1648, ending with Cromwell as head of the Commonwealth. On the side of the king were the nobles, the clergy and country gentlemen; their opponents were the tradesmen and shopkeepers of the towns. De Gibbin says that the Cromwell wars were commercial, and supported both by the religious views of the Puritans and the desires of the merchants.

In 1651 Parliament passed the Navigation Act prohibiting foreign goods to be brought into the country unless on English ships. This struck a blow at the Dutch trade, as they were the chief carriers from foreign countries. Trade was transferred to English ships. This caused the war with the Dutch, when the Dutch admiral tied the broom to his mast because he swept England off the sea; but two years later the Dutch were defeated. Cromwell demanded trade with the Spanish colonies and religious freedom for English settlers in such colonies. His demands were refused as he well knew they would be, whereupon he seized Jamaica, 1655, and succeeded in giving England a foothold in the West Indies. Not content with this victory, with the consent of the mercantile class England declared war on Holland, the result of which I have just pointed out. In one of the Dutch wars England won New York from them. One writer has said that "from 1650 to 1674 the Dutch were our natural enemies and the furious fighting in the Channel was really a struggle for the carrying trade and dominion in the East." The Dutch were the boldest navigators and the most skillful manufacturers in Europe. They were eager advocates of civil liberty and embraced

ideologically unprogressive group in any community.

Modern industry, on the other hand, is industry on a large-scale plan, in which large numbers of workers co-operate together in production. Their labors are sub-divided, so that a worker does not appear as an individual producer, but as an inter-related, inter-dependent unit among other like workers in the productive process. This discipline of work-day life induces a habit of mind more disposed than the peasants to thinking in social terms. Also, the technological processes of modern machine production are mechanical processes. Each process is but natural forces guided to work to a predetermined end in a continuity of known material cause and effect. The machine proletariat are, mentally, largely creatures of this matter-of-fact work-day life in which there are no mysteries. So that they are notoriously materialistic in thought and irreligious, not actively hostile to religion, but indifferent as though not understanding its belief in supernatural forces. But the chief unconventionalism of the industrial proletariat arises from the fact that they are without property, either in the means of wealth production or the products of their labor, in a society whose dominant and pervading institutional fact is the principle of ownership. And naturally, the sacredness of this principle appeals with less force to the propertyless than to any other group in the community. In this last respect, it is most significant that of all the various occupational groups, there is a more widening difference in the habits of life of the business class and the industrial proletariat, especially those in the strictly mechanical occupations, and this carries with it a widening difference in the habits of thought and the habitual grounds and methods of reasoning resorted to by each class, resulting in a growing incapacity to understand each other's point of view.

C. S.

(Continued in next issue)

the Reformation. They became an independent nation in 1684 after a severe struggle with Spain, during which they had increased in wealth and made extensive acquisitions in the East Indies, and had the most powerful navy in Europe until England won her place in the sun.

We come down now to the Revolution in England, 1688, which we will deal with in our next lesson. This was the culmination of the conflict between the King and the bourgeoisie which broke out in the civil war 1642 to 1649.

PETER T. LECKIE.

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