

Correspondence

RE CAPITALIST EFFICIENCY.

Editor Clarion:

H. W. Woods president of the U. F. A., Chairman Alberta Wheat Producers Ltd., etc., addressed the farmers of the Stanmore district on August 12th. For three hours we sat and listened to a confused jumble of economics, capitalist myths, meaningless words and phrases that wellnigh did the English language to death. "False social laws," "True democracy," "Intelligent citizenship," "Efficiency" and "Inefficiency" were the words repeated time and time again, no doubt with the idea of impressing indelibly these magic words upon the minds of the audience. The audience, which, besides farmers consisted of preachers, preacher-students, bank managers, clerks, etc., did their best and with "bleary eyes and blunted souls" hung onto the magic words for dear life, believing, so it seemed, that the salvation and emancipation of mankind depended upon these words. Mr. Woods told the people of the great good the U. F. A. had done for them in the past and promises of even greater things in the future. The poor debt-ridden farmers forgot their miseries for a moment and went home rejoicing. And as they went I thought I heard them sing:

"I will always be staunch
To my mortgaged-up ranch,
In the wilds of the sun-blistered lea;
Where I can rest my back
On an old gunny sack
As I dream of the fortunes to be.
Tis a pleasure for me
Just to gaze on, to see:
The mustard, the thistle, the pig weed galore,
Down the road that leads back
To my tar paper shack.
To my mortgaged-up farm at Stanmore."

It is a mighty good thing to have parlor reformers like Mr. Woods come along once in a while; it enables students of the social movement to gauge sentiment and public opinion, it reveals those that are true to the class struggle. "Efficiency" and "Inefficiency" are two words that Mr. Woods specializes upon. Mr. Woods' whole argument can be summed up thus: The milling and agriculture implement industries are efficient therefore these concerns can charge any old price they please for their commodities. Agricultural implements will be higher next year than at present, all due to the efficiency of the implement business. The farmers never had an efficient selling organization and for that reason the farmer is compelled to take just what the other fellow chooses to give him and the way to solve the numerous problems confronting the world is for the farmers to establish efficient selling organizations.

Now I never claimed to know much. I have never won any prizes at a brain judging contest. But the idea that that agricultural implements are high because of the selling efficiency of that industry can be entertained only by those that know nothing about the matter, or by those that have escaped attention of the authorities in charge of mental institutions. According to Mr. Woods' logic Capitalist industries that have lowered prices since the war are inefficient; those that have maintained high prices are efficient. The International Harvester Company and the Standard Oil Company are interwoven, the directors of the one are in part directors of the other. Capitalists in order to concentrate their wealth, marry only within their own economic group. So that we find the two great trusts mentioned are related by marriage. One would expect that the one trust would be just as efficient in selling their wares as the other, and yet farm implement prices are on the same level or nearly so as during the war, while oils and gasoline are lower in price. According to Mr. Woods' logic the Inter. Harvester Company is efficient and the Standard Oil Company is inefficient, but the Standard Oil Company is making money and declaring fat dividends while the Harvester Company can hardly make ends meet.

Automobiles and auto tire prices have dropped in some cases to pre-war prices. According to Mr. Woods these concerns are inefficient but they are declaring fat dividends, while the Massey Harris Company has been losing millions of dollars during the past few years in spite of high prices of farm machinery.

The fact of the matter is the agricultural implement business on the North American continent has been over done. 75% of the factories could be junked and the balance could take care of the demand for machinery.

When Western Canada was opened up for development it offered a fertile field for exploitation by manufacturers of farm machinery. Demand for machinery was supplied mostly by American concerns, but Canadian capitalists were not slow to realize the advantage of home industries to supply the home market. Several implement concerns sprang up and by manipulating politics succeeded in having a tariff put on imported machinery. These concerns grew and prospered and in due time began competing in foreign markets. But the thing happened that always happens: implement concerns sprang up in these foreign markets and while inventions and im-

provements increased the ability of the manufacturer to produce more and more goods the markets for these were getting less and less, with the result that Canadian implement concerns are operating on part time. Now if a farmer has 1000 acres of land, buildings, horses and machinery for operating, but only farms 100 acres, it can be seen that capital invested, insurance depreciation, upkeep, etc., would be as great in farming 100 acres with a 1000-acre outfit, result would be waste labor resulting in high cost of production. That is precisely the condition of the agricultural implement business. They are producing 100 binders in a factory capable of producing 1000. There are certain fixed charges that remain the same whether 100 or 1000 implements are produced. Production under these conditions is high. Therefore implements must sell high. This can not be called efficiency. I would call it capitalism digging its own grave.

The efficiency of capitalism! ye gods. Listen to this from the pen of J. A. MacDonald: "The efficiency of Capitalism! At the present time there are approximately 10,000,000 workers unemployed on the North American continent. According to the latest government reports each worker produces on an average about twenty dollars worth of wealth each working day. This amount, which is lost through the efficiency of capitalism, would build 330,000 homes costing five thousand dollars each week. In every city one can see battalions of this immense army of labor desired even the right to work. In every division point and at water tanks one can see their camp fires illumine the night. In these jungles of the working class, due to the jungles of capitalism, one can find shoemakers with their toes sticking out through the remnants telling their owners of the efficiency of capitalism—an efficiency which puts shoemakers into the jungles or the bread line, while millions of workers are without shoes, and machines that could be making shoes are idle and rusting."

But why enumerate the ever increasing loss through the social waste of unemployment—the incalculable waste in wealth, and the waste in the degeneration of the workers, which creates all values. The efficiency of capitalism! That is well displayed in the millions of men who are working, yet producing nothing of social value, or worse, whose activity is anti-social. In the modern cities under capitalism there is an amount of useless and wasted labor that would, if properly directed, be sufficient to destroy disease, enlighten mankind, and forever clean the earth of the scourge of poverty. We find thousands of business establishments selling the same product. Thousands of useless clerks do their work for hundreds of useless business institutions, where, under a sane system two or three central stores would be sufficient. Millions of dollars are wasted each week in useless advertising, such as "Buy your Pear's Soap at Robem's,"—met by "Buy your Pear's Soap at Skinem's."

Hundreds of salesmen, middlemen, wholesalers, all part of an inefficient commercial system are part of the "inefficiency of capitalism." Recently I was in Calgary, and found another of the indications of the efficiency of capitalism: Thousands of workers, lured by the siren songs of prosperity, had bought their own homes. They had believed in that "prosperity" which is one of the mirages of the present system. Then in the dark years of 1914 to 1919 they went to France under the lure of another siren song: "A world fit for heroes to live in." Then some of them came back to the darker years of undiluted Wilsonian democracy. And now they are living in the era of capitalist efficiency in a world where war is ended. But they are not living in their own homes. More than half of the homes in Calgary are owned by the city, taken over for taxes. This is the efficiency of capitalism. The efficiency of capitalism! the efficiency of disease and death. Some years ago Dr. Woods Hutchinson, one of the great authorities of the world on medical matters, made the statement that within the period of ten years the medical profession could eradicate the white plague, tuberculosis, if they were permitted to get real sanitation, to destroy the breeding places of the germs which each year are responsible for one out of every seven deaths on the North American continent. These germs breed in the dark atmosphere of poverty, caused by ill feeding and inhuman conditions. But capitalism for its existence demands the same conditions as the tuberculosis germ. But there is a disease more dread than tuberculosis: the living death of insanity. An expert on this subject within the last month made the statement that if the present percentage of increase in this disease were continued the entire world would be insane in another forty years. The whole world will be as insane as the capitalist system in forty years unless the workers take a hand in the management of industry and the reclamation of humanity from the scourge of the present system. Either the workers will organize or within forty years the entire world will be crazy, and being crazy, fitted to admire the efficiency of capitalism, a social system as demoted as ever formed the hallucination of a madhouse.

Under capitalism there can be but one sanity, the sanity of revolt. But one efficiency, and that the efficiency of seeking to build a new society that will be efficiency, a noble mansion in which the workers of the world can express their spirit of workmanship, and find scope for their creative instincts.

Thus closeth the first chapter on capitalist efficiency, from which the Lord deliver us.

Yours for Socialism,

S. V. VALISCO.

Stanmore, Alberta.

OBITUARY.

Editor Clarion:

The Comrades in Edmonton have asked me to inform you of the death of a great supporter and subscriber of the S. P. of C. and The Clarion. We would like you to have the following notice inserted in the Western Clarion:

Ralph Benedict died on October 12, when he was at a meeting in the new Empire Theatre, of heart failure.

He spent all his life in the working-class movement and nothing was too small or too great for him to do for the cause he worked for.

Having taken part in the movement in Russia, France and Great Britain, and lastly Canada, his experiences taught him the value of education, and he was always ready to help organize a meeting, or give his whole support to any S. P. of C. propagandist.

He was buried on the 15th and a large procession took place, of all grades of thought in the movement, to show their last respects for the work he had done. Representatives of the Labor Party, Workers' Party, S. P. of C. and the Workman's Circle spoke at the funeral, and we can truly say he died as he lived. A good Comrade in the fight for working class emancipation.

Yours Fraternally,
J. Jacobs.

Edmonton, Alta.

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