

been in vain had there not existed at the time a social class interested in those great changes, and capable of compassing them, \* \* \* \*

"The class which gave the Revolution its chiefs, its outward and visible forms and the irresistible energy of its hopes, was the bourgeoisie, intelligent, ambitious and rich \* \* \* \* Finally behind the bourgeoisie, and afar off, came the crowd of serfs, rustics whom the acquisition of land had gradually enfranchised, and who were the more eager to enjoy their definite liberation because it was close at hand. So that to Louis XV's cynical and hopeless declaration: 'Après moi le deluge,' the setting 18th century responded by a belief in progress and an appeal to the future. A long drawn echo from all the classes hailed a revolution that was possible because it was necessary \* \* \* \* If this revolution did not burst forth sooner, continues the 'Britannica, in the actual lifetime of Louis XV., if in Louis XVI's reign there was a renewal of loyalty to the king, before the appeal to liberty was made, that is to be explained by this hope of recovery. But Louis XVI's reign (1774-1792) was only to be a temporary halting place, an artifice of history for passing through the transition period whilst elaborating the transformation which was to revolutionize, together with France, the whole world."

In 1774 the monarchy (Louis XVI) engaged Turgot as minister of finance to attempt to remedy what the Britannica calls "the hideous bankruptcy of France." Turgot's intention was to abolish privileges in feudal imposts, and the monopolies of trade corporations which were stifling the free development of industry and trade. But, says the Britannica: "Economy in the matter of public finance implies a grain of severity in the collection of taxes as well as in expenditure. By the former Turgot hampered the great interests; by the second he thwarted the desires of courtiers, not only of the second rank, but of the first. He was after two years of office, thrown over by the commercial world and the bourgeoisie and the court, headed by Marie Antoinette. The Choiseul Party which had gradually been reconstructed under the influence of the queen (Marie Antoinette), the princes, Parlement (supposedly a non-political body), the prebendaries and the trade corporations, worked adroitly to eliminate this reformer of lucrative abuses." Necker was brought in to succeed him. A more able, but a man of smaller ideas, he stayed in office for five years (1776-1781). But in spite of his moderation and his skill he also failed, frustrated by similar influences and for similar reasons as had frustrated Turgot. Both these ministers were undoubtedly by far the two ablest men in the kingdom, both recognized down to this day, especially Turgot, as Statesmen and economists of outstanding genius. There was yet time under their administrations for both ameliorative and progressive reforms. Yet no leeway was granted them, they were hustled out of office, not by revolutionaries, but by upper class reactionaries, and France went galloping to the revolution. Truly, Mr. McLeod, those whom the gods intend to destroy they first make mad. And look! a veritable dance of death: "Having fought the oligarchy of privilege, the Monarchy next tried to rally it to its side and all the springs of the old regime were strained to the breaking point. "The military rule of the Marquis de Segur eliminated the plebians from the army; while the great lords, drones in the hive, worked with a kind of fever at the enforcement of their seigniorial rights; the feudal system was making a last struggle before dying. The Church claimed her right of ordering the civil estates of all Frenchmen as an absolute mistress more strictly than ever. \* \* \* These forces were inexorable."

Our letter writer never appears to have asked himself what either the reactionary privileged classes or the revolutionary middle classes of the 18th century of France, or of Russia of 1917 had to offer, through the moderate parties, to the underlying population of distressed wage-workers and expropriated peasantry. Neither has he apparently asked himself: Why should the French peasantry of the 18th century, whose descendants in our time constitute the backbone of the present established order in France, have turned to revolutionary courses? But then, if he did so, his answer, to be consistent

with his theory of revolutions, would be, "all a move in the game of the revolutionaries!" The "Britannica," however, discourses on "the crying abuses of the old feudal regime and the wide-spread agrarian distress," and says of the middle classes that "they were just as jealous of their rights in property and land as the old aristocracy had ever been."

The Monarch, in extremity, summoned the States-General to help in the growing chaos, and popular fury for a time found in that parliamentary body a means of expression it had always lacked. Necker, a popular public hero, was recalled to office. "A widely extended franchise resulted in a vast majority for the third estate, who, considering that they represented 90 per cent. of the nation, declared that they represented the nation and therefore were authorized to take resolutions unaided, the first being that in future no arrangement for taxation could take place without their consent. The king, urged by the privileged classes, responded to this first revolutionary act, as in 1614, by closing the hall where the Third Estate were sitting. They adjourned and swore not to separate before having established the constitution of the kingdom. \* \* \* \* The elections had sufficed finally to show that the ancien regime, characterized from the social point of view by inequality, from the political point of view by arbitrariness, and from religious point of view by intolerance, was completed from the administrative point of view by inextricable disorder." For two more years the conflict between the king and the Assembly waged back and forth, while he, in the interim, surrounded himself with a praetorian guard of foreign regiments. The king was at hopeless odds with the Assembly and plotted against it. Then came the deluge.

I have tried to exhibit by the case of France how political absolutism and special privilege damned up the forces of change. Russia was another like case. In both cases the representative principle in government and its appropriate machinery was only established on the very eve of the revolution, when chaos reigned and passions ran high. None of the contending classes had time to acquire the habits of depending on persuasion and of accepting majority verdicts or the dispositions for reaching compromise policies and other skills and disciplines only to be got by long use of the mechanisms and practice in the ways of representative institutions by which opinion finds expression and is put into effect. The violent revolutions were conditioned, in a large part, by the centuries of monarchial and feudal despotisms.

I suggest the British case today is another different case to the cases of France and Russia, so much so, at least, as to warrant it a study as a special case. Whatever else there is also, and there is very much, six hundred years of existence in Great Britain of the representative principles in government and its progressive extension and use of its instrumentalities, the values put upon that which has been fought for and won, the traditions, habits and attitudes of mind which are the outgrowth of group life under such a political system—all this needs must be held to count for something as a controlling force on conduct, when we forecast the character of future political activities of the British people. I strongly believe those activities will be constitutional, supported with the use or threat to use such extra-political non-violent means as mass strikes and the boycott. Constitutional means have already put a minority Labor party in charge of governmental powers in Great Britain when violent means had not the slightest chance of success, even if the Party's supporters were all willing to use violence. I suggest the case of the United States and the Canadian case have much in common with the British case because of a similar and related political system. Let us seek to understand the masses of the people of our own communities, and advocate no methods of change alien to their ways and repugnant to their thought. The masses know in their bones that the representative institutions of political democracy have not failed, but that on the contrary, it is they themselves who have failed to make use of them in their own best interests. Let us create socialist opinion! Let the organiza-

tions of the producing masses grow! Arouse no unessential antagonisms, and, as socialist ideals and principles spread, they will give direction to the economic and political activities of those masses.

"C."

### LETTER FROM MOTHER TO SON—No. 3

Dear Son:—

In my former letters I discussed with you some of the parliamentary aspects of political action. Not because those were the most important, but because in your particular case the most obvious.

Political action is any effort which aids in gaining control of political power, a part of which is registration at the polls of political opinion. But as the class-consciousness of the workers awakens the tendency is to restrict the franchise to those groups in society who are apt, either through their more favorable economic conditions or their political backwardness, to support the rule of ownership. As, for instance, the bills providing for the absentee vote of the soldiers, the traveling salesman, the educational qualification and the recent provision for the registration of the vote in the soldiers' homes, even while outlawing whole political parties which are considered inimical to the owning class interests. These are some of the manifestations here in the U. S. A., while in other countries where the workers are politically more mature they have set up military dictatorships which disfranchise them entirely, or which force them to register in favor of their owners.

Now what are the lessons to be learned. Is it not that political democracy functions only so long as the owning class can maintain its supremacy over our minds, and which they themselves do not hesitate to destroy when it bids fair to function otherwise than in their interests. You can readily see therefore, just to what extent the ballot serves the working class.

I strongly advise you to compare what the Labor parties in the various countries which have pinned their faith in parliamentary action exclusively have been permitted to do through their conservative leadership toward the emancipation of the working class, with what has already been accomplished by the dictatorship of the proletariat under the leadership of Nicolai Lenin. The latter predicated his action on the supposition of Karl Marx that a democratic Republican form of government was the form under which labor could best be exploited.

All this I know is quite contrary to your former ideas of what constitutes political action, but, as I mentioned before, we are reared in bourgeois ideas through their control of all the authorized avenues of education, which they obtain through the political power of the State. These ideas only give way by our imbibing freely of working class education.

Your loving

Mother.

## SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

### PROPAGANDA MEETINGS

EVERY SUNDAY

### THEATRE ROYAL

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17.

Speaker: DEAN COLEMAN (U.B.C.)

Subject: "Is There a New Psychology?"

Dean Coleman was advertised to speak on the 3rd, but through a misunderstanding as to dates did not.

All meetings at 8 p.m.  
Questions. Discussion.