

Environmental Influences

BY F. W. MOORE.

A PART from those groups of radicals in every country who understand that a class war has been raging from time immemorial, there are hosts of soi-disant brethren who, because of their delusions concerning the meaning of the term environment, and a consequent misconception of its full import, imagine that the transition from the present anarchy in production and distribution to the balanced operations that must characterize the activities of the co-operative commonwealth, needs no special effort on the part of the individual, who is therefore justified in adopting a laissez-faire attitude towards conditions, and in cultivating contentment with the remnants of a system that will soon pass, and leave him in proud possession of an industrially organized world.

We shall try to show why this conception of the situation is quite erroneous. It is, of course, entertained by people who in estimating the power of environment, carelessly ignore certain factors pregnant with effect in moulding the human character, the formation of which they are pleased to ascribe to impressions inspired solely by their industrial experience.

The inspiration of most people, however, is not derived from these sources directly, but from the interpretation put upon them by the agents of an exploiting class, who, having the moulds of public opinion in their possession, are able to distort them to shapes corresponding to those flagrant falsehoods that everywhere pass muster as gospel truth.

These metaphorical grotesques, amongst other places, are embodied in the insidious propaganda with which the news-press of the world is permeated: but that is not all, for in connection with them goes a world-wide surveillance to which are subjected those comrades who are most likely to understand the meaning of the wily tactics of their exploitation—tactics which we shall try to show further down, are the vogue in all localities where working men are wont to congregate.

The propaganda may appear in many guises but is often hidden in items of interesting gossip. It is always directed against institutions, societies, or persons whose existence is considered inimical to the continued dominance of capital. It is therefore not hard to understand why communism should be one of the favourite targets.

In our den are about a dozen old newspapers that the hotel Chinaman has not yet carried off to light his fires: from these we shall take two examples of veiled propaganda.

The first is from the Weekly Province, (Vancouver) for September 18. It is founded on a text of scripture—"But they all had things in common"—Acts, IV, 22. Commenting on this the writer goes on to say: "This early communistic experiment was made under the most favorable conditions. It was directed by unselfish men of indubitable honesty and wisdom, yet it failed miserably as all other forms of communism have failed. They have all been experimental and all brief. The mild forms have ended in disappointment. The fierce forms in disaster.

"Ananias and Sapphira sold their lands for the common fund and made a false return of the proceeds; therefore communism, like the income tax, is a fertile begetter of lies."

Now considering that the communism that he refers to, was parochial and not international, we have no comment to make from a political viewpoint. We presume, however, that he refers to all kinds of communism when he asserts that it is a "fertile begetter of lies." We wonder if he ever were present at one of the many parties held by modern political parties to vilify each other. We ourselves were deluged with one in particular, that might be regarded as a sample of all the others. It is called "The Trail of Burnt Books," being an indictment of certain railroad contractors who are said to have destroyed all memoranda containing the calculations

in support of the final estimates of the chief engineer, Mr. A. F. Proctor, who stated on the stand that his progress reports running into millions of dollars, and which should support his final estimates, were no good, and might be 50% over or 50% under; as a matter of fact final settlements on earth excavation, were practically 100% more than the progress estimate. The expenditure referred to involved \$7,745,569.39 of the tax-payers money.

We mention these facts for the purpose of pointing out that such a deficit must have been greatly in excess of the sum that Ananias and Sapphira kept back, and that therefore, according to the findings of our profound logician of "The Province" the capitalistic system too, must be a "fruitful begetter of lies and fraud."

The next example dealing with the same capitalistic bug-bear of communism, is taken from page 8 of "Farm and Home" for August 14, 1924. It is reprinted from the report of a speech by Mr. Stanley Baldwin to the members of the "Association of Conservative Clubs," and is as follows: "Where an attempt has been made to set up a working socialism, the small heap they had for division before the war, has dwindled now to nothing, with the result that in that country they have had starvation.

The prosperity of a country can only be increased by the prosperity of the people in it. It cannot be increased by taking from one class and giving to another."

Mr. Stanley Baldwin, of course, refers to Russia when he talks of the "small heap that has now dwindled," as if the object of communists were to get possession of that miserable little pile. Anybody who has even an elementary knowledge of communism, knows what the communists wanted was the large heap of potential wealth involved in the possession of the natural resources of the country, which were, like the natural resources of any country, only held in trust until such time as the people become sufficiently enlightened to take over the management in the interests of the nation at large. In this case the "heap" available from year to year was disgracefully administered in the interests of an insignificant percentage of the population—chiefly re-actionary feudalists who were a menace to the whole civilized world.

Space will not permit of further extracts on the subject of propaganda and we need only add that any person who becomes familiar with the doctrines of socialism will have no difficulty in picking them out for him or herself. They occur in almost every capitalistic newspaper and therefore constitute a source of inspiration in a factitious environing circle that extends around the civilized world.

Related to this circle is the international system of surveillance that we referred to above. It seems to be a necessary complement to the hypocrisy used in an effort to prevent the masses from discovering the economic foundations of society. We could hardly expect monopolists engrossed in the study of the dollar and cent to think of any interests but their own; nor do they. Hence the employment of thousands of spies, who in the character of "stool pigeons" give information concerning the opinions of radicals whose philosophy might arouse in their fellow-workmen a dangerous desire to search for the truth concerning the real basis of their dependent condition.

The employment of such spies is not confined to any particular industrially developed country, since the exigencies of a dying capitalism invokes the practice in them all. Readers of Socialist and Labor papers will recognize the type which we shall discuss in connection with data taken from "The Social Bulletin" of the Methodist Federation for Social Service for September 1924: "How widespread the evil has become, is shown by the fact that nearly every large corporation now employs numerous spies, informers, and special officers from

whom they receive daily reports concerning the conversations among the men and the plans of unions."—Hunter.

It is estimated that the Pinkerton, Thiel and Burns private detective's syndicates are employing about 135,000 operatives, operating about 100 offices and over 10,000 local agencies, and that 75% of their operatives are under cover in the various labour organizations at a total cost of \$65,000,000 annually." (Spielman).

It often happens that these agencies are operated under a misleading name, as we can see from a glance at the following: "These industrial detectives prefer now-a-days to be known as 'harmonizers and conciliators,' as 'service corporations,' as 'engineers—commercial, financial and industrial.' (Howard).

The Marshall Detective Agency has operated under such names as: "The Marshall Detective Service," "The Marshall Service," "The National Cereal Mills," and the "Gate City Detective Service." Says one of its letters: "... we would have no signs upon our doors and windows except the sign of the employment agency, therefore the sign on the doors of our new office will read simply, 'The South Western Flour Mill Workers' Free Employment Bureau'" (Spielman). Sometimes spies act as union members and officials: The service "has among its working force, men who are affiliated with nearly all of the labour organizations" (from the pamphlet of Sherman Service).

A coveted position is that of recording secretary: "... we wish to advise you that all of our operatives are instructed to accept the office of recording secretary if possible, as the recording secretary has nothing to do with agitation, simply keeping the records which are valuable to us." Marshall Detective Service Co., to R. S. Hurd, Red Star Milling Co. Wichita. (quoted by Spielman).

That there are men skilled in creating confusion amongst union members may be gathered from our next: "... will state that if you place three more of our operatives to work in your plant that we will guarantee to break the union in Topeka."—Marshall Service to Charles Wolff jr., Wolff Packing Co. Topeka, (quoted by Spielman).

Often spies are employed to get rid of agitators: "It will be necessary that we weed out agitators in Salina Mills... the same as was done in St. Joseph's, Hutchison, Kansas City, and other towns... many of the men employed at the present time will have to be gotten rid of." Report of operatives to Marshall Detective Service, (quoted by Spielman).

We have all heard of the "agent provocateur" in Europe, but in that line they are not at all ahead of the manipulators of the New World: "These spy agencies set out to find rottenness, and if they do not actually find it, some make it, or fake it... The 'boring from within' which radical agitators are charged with, is a drop in the bucket to the boring that the industrial spy does for money which the employer pays"—Roger W. Babson in his bulletin to industrial leaders, (quoted by Spielman).

Of course those who are familiar with Socialist literature will have known all about these conditions long ago, but we would point out to casual or new readers that Monopoly and its ramifications, are not conducive to the development of thinking men. Its protagonists need, while they also try to breed, slaves; yet, for that we should not blame them. On ourselves we must depend. It is our business to do what we can to induce the development of real men and women to whom the mildest form of slavery would be as repulsive as a rattlesnake.

That would be the natural mental attitude assumed by an enlightened human being, and no person is enlightened, with the enlightenment that serves humanity, until he or she understands the fall

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