

The Capitalist Class

Division of Labor and Competition.

While on the one hand, the industrial development draws commerce and credit in ever closer relation with industry, it brings about, on the other hand, an increased division of labor; the various functions which the capitalist has to fulfill in the industrial life, divide more and more and fall to the part of separate undertakings and institutions. Formerly, it was the merchant's function not only to buy and sell goods, but to store them, and often to carry them to far distant markets. He had to assort his goods, display them, and render them accessible to the individual purchaser. Today there is a division of labor not between wholesale and retail trade only; we find also large undertakings for the transportation and the storing of goods. In those large central markets called exchanges, buying and selling have to such extent become separate pursuits and freed themselves from the other functions commonly pertaining to the merchant, that not only are goods located in distant regions, or even not yet produced, bought and sold there, but that goods are bought without the purchaser intending to take possession of them, and others are sold without the seller ever having had them in his possession.

In former days a capitalist could not be conceived without the thought of a large safe into which money was collected and out of which he took the funds which he needed to make payments. Today the treasury of the capitalist has become the subject of a separate occupation in all industrially advanced countries especially in England and America. The bank has sprung up. Payments are no longer made to the capitalist, but to his bank, and from his bank, not from him, and his debts collected. And so it happens that a few central concerns perform today the functions of treasury for the whole capitalist class of the country.

But although the several functions of the capitalist thus become the functions of separate undertakings, they do not become independent of each other except in appearance and legal form; economically, they remain as closely bound to and dependent upon each other as ever. The functions of any of these undertakings could not continue if those of any of the others with which they are connected were to be interrupted.

The more commerce, credit and industry become independent and the more the separate functions of the capitalist class are assumed by separate undertakings, the greater is the dependence of one capitalist upon another. Capitalist production becomes accordingly, more and more a gigantic body, whose various limbs are in the closest relation to each other. Thus, while the masses of the people become ever more dependent upon the capitalists, the capitalists themselves become ever more dependent upon one another.

The economic machinery of the modern system of production constitutes a more and more delicate and complicated mechanism; its uninterrupted operation depends constantly more upon whether each of its wheels

fits in with the others and does the work expected of it. Never yet did any system of production stand in such need of careful direction as does the present one. But the institution of private property makes it impossible to introduce plan and order into this system.

While the several industries become, in point of fact, more and more dependent upon one another, in point of law, they remain wholly independent. The means of production in every single industry are private property; their owner can do with them as he pleases.

The farther large production develops, the larger every single industry becomes, the better is the order to which the economic activity of each is reduced, and the more accurate and well considered is the plan upon which each is carried on, down to the smallest details. The joint operation of the various industries is, however, left to the blind force of free competition. It is at the expense of a prodigious waste of power and of materials and under stress of constantly increasing economic crisis that free competition

keeps the industrial mechanism in motion. The process goes on, not by putting every one in his place, but crushing every one who stands in the way. This is called "the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence." The fact is, however, that competition crushes not so much the truly unfit, as those who stand in the wrong place, and who lack either the special qualifications or, what is more important, the capital to survive. But competition is no longer satisfied with crushing those who are unequal to the "struggle for existence." The destruction of every one of these draws in its wake the ruin of numberless others who were economically connected with the bankrupt concern—wage-earners, creditors, etc.

"Every man is the architect of his own fortune." So runs a favorite proverb. This proverb is an heirloom from the days of small production, when the fate of every single breadwinner, at most that of his family also, depended upon his own personal qualities. Today the fate of every member of a capitalist community depends less and less upon his own individuality, and more and more upon a thousand circumstances that are wholly beyond his control. Competition no longer brings about the survival of the fittest.

CONCILIATION

THE meaning of the late conciliation propaganda is becoming clearer. Heretofore, it has been obscured by the misty vagaries of hero-worship, and the whirling kaleidoscope of bourgeois "duty." But now that the spasm of heroworship has subsided, and the intensification of the market struggle has overwhelmed the philosophy of duty, the true relationship of capital and labor is coming steadily to the forefront of reality. And in a manner, that even the running reader may see. The concentration of capital is sacrificing the profit of to-day, for the greater spoil of tomorrow; is clothing the national state with the politics of imperialism; sharpening the edge of class conflict; stripping the camouflage from the falsity of conciliation.

In Canada, we are threatened with a new Premier—a more dangerous thing than the "mounties." But, although Canada is a democracy (may the Lord save our beans), it will not be the people of Canada who will elect the new premier. That will be the privilege of capitalist interests, acting behind cabinet "conventions"; and even if the "people" did elect him, the difference would be invisible—the nominee being of the ruling class. The politics of Canada, like the politics of all capitalist countries, is not an affair of national import only. It is a part of the wider organization of world politics, of necessity, since capitalist production and exchange is no longer national, but for the world market. With the close of the Anglo-German war, the old capitalist methods are obsolete. The new (anticipated) conditions of the world market demand new alignments of capitalist control, more efficient methods of production, different adjustments of commerce. Canadian capital is associated with world capital, and therefore in accordance with the interests and necessities of international finance, Canadian politics must be shaped; must harmonise

with the needs and conform with the regulations of the greater interests. And be the premier, whom he may, his election will be of the power of that greater capital with that end in view.

In America, the quarrel over the Peace Treaty is of the same nature. From economic exigencies the U. S. entered the war, and emerged flying the blue ribbon of commercial supremacy. To maintain that supremacy is the objective of American statescraft, but as a national unity, single handed, free from European alliances and entanglements which in future may involve the U. S. ruling class in struggle not to their interest. But in the nature of capitalist development, world exploitation is not a national monopoly, but vests in the polity of international control. And being economically powerful, American finance will exercise a supreme influence in the councils of that control.

In Britain there has been an attempt (among the lesser capitalist fry, whose holdings are impaired by capitalist concentration) to renew the old anarchy of party politics, oblivious of the fact that the pre-war world has vanished; that war-time industry has dissolved their individualism, as completely as science has destroyed their gods. But faced with nationalisation, the growing solidarity of labor, the open (though limited) advocacy of sovietism and the imperious necessity of intensive production, capitalist differences surely will be merged in the Greater Imperialism.

All this is the reflex of the new world condition. If capitalist society is to be maintained, intensity of competition overcome, adverse exchanges reversed, then the world market must be controlled; the volume of production must be increased; labor must be cheap. Just as coalition mergers are the political evidence of economic amalgamation, so censorships and

bludgeonings, "red" pogroms and injunctions, are rude witness to capitalist concentration in that throbbing world of wasted energy—capitalist industry.

Every attempt of labor to secure better conditions is countered by force; every effort for social amelioration parried by investigating committees (of ruling class personnel); every scheme of reconstruction founded on profit; every plan of "conciliation" reflects the hope of gain. Palpably conciliation is a sham, democracy a figment of the imagination. And the regularities of class expediency, furnish proof of the class consciousness of the rulers, and its absence in the proletariat.

Conciliation is beyond all question impossible. To expect such a contingency is to expect repulsions to act as affinities; is to expect the miraculous. Conciliation would mean the negation of the capitalist economic. And the capitalist class cannot accomplish the negation, for the abrogation of its law must extinguish capital, as irrevocably as the violation of physical law would shatter the solar system. Capital and labor are as wide apart as the poles, in nature and objective. The one is exploitation and profit, the other economic freedom and use-production. The existence of capital compels the existence of wage labor. The accumulation of capital is the economic servitude of the worker; the surplus of the master, the degradation of the slave. And the only remedy is the abolition of capital.

Labor follows after strange gods. The necessities of its harried life drive it to action, willy-nilly. It is impelled along the barren ways of reform; bartered by governments; betrayed by office seekers; exchanging its life for subsistence, its manhood for a crust. Yet that seems to be the only way to emancipation. Goaded on by the rough buffetings of economic determinism, we have little time for reason or opportunity for study. But that same determinism is whirling us on to the climax of capitalist society, forcing us face to face with the cause of our poverty and misery—the capitalist ownership of the social means of life. When capitalist development attains to that point, then shall we see—and act.

Education and propaganda cannot hasten the end, cannot influence but the class awakened, or convince the victims of tradition. And the capitalist class will misinform, slander and repress. Still education is urgently necessary. For when the crisis comes, when the social forms of production have broken through the restrictions of the capitalist mode of production, it can only be the wisdom of widespread social understanding, that can prevent the burning passions, generated in the proletariat by centuries of agony and repression, from recoiling blindly, and tragically on society itself, and smooth the passage of that society from capitalist anarchy to socialist co-operation. R.

Propaganda Meeting, at Empress Theatre, corner Gore Avenue and Hastings street, Sunday, 8 p.m. Doors open at 7:30 p.m.

Articles are desired on the Socialist Philosophy or on current events interpreted in the light of its principles.