

THE INDICATOR

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The Making of a Socialist

SOMEONE has said that fools learn from experience, and wise men from observation and reflection. If this be correct, it is to be feared that the dictum of Carlyle as to most people on these islands being found in the former category has a good deal of truth in it. Certainly, with regard to political and economic phenomena, the great majority of working-class men and women—even those who have a tendency towards independent thinking—seem to require something obvious and hammer-like to be forced on them in a quite personal way before they are able to visualize and focus the true political and economic situation and their place relative to it.

For instance, the loss of a dearly-loved relation or friend in war will be necessary before they can bring themselves to attempt fathom the cause and object of war; the disaster of unemployment must overtake them before they can understand the part unemployment plays in the present social system; the continuous scraping to make ends meet must be brought forcibly home to them before they can realize that the amount of the meagre wage they receive is based upon their cost of subsistence; the superciliousness or brutality to them personally by someone "drest in a little brief authority" must touch their self-esteem before the fact of their degradation as members of the "lower" class, as social slaves, can germinate in their brains.

In some way or other their self-interest must suffer before they can realize that politics is anything but a game played by followers of different schools of thought for their own amusement, or that economics is anything but a dry and pedantic subject, fit only for professional pedagogues and a few fanatics.

It is, of course, not surprising that such an attitude of mind should predominate. The early training of working-class men and women, both in the school and the home, the noxious doctrines inculcated later on from the pulpit, platform, and Press, all do their part in forming the working class into what the capitalists desire that they should become, that is, in the sphere of politics, adherents to, and supporters of, one or other of the orthodox political parties, and in the sphere of economics, hard-working, docile and respectable wage-slaves.

So complete and successful is the slave-morality engendered by the agents of the capitalists, and accepted without question by most of the contemporary generation of working-class men and women, that the younger and growing generation finds it almost impossible, without some particularly violent reaction, to fight against the stream of capitalist ethics, and become instead op-

ponents of capitalism; to become, indeed—at least in theory—what is, from the capitalist standpoint, immoral, irreligious, and unethical.

Even when this negative attitude of direct and bitter opposition to the capitalist system has been attained, it is practically useless insofar as it remains purely negative. A consciousness of the further development of society must be born; the knowledge that, following the inevitable downfall of the capitalist system—based as that system is on the production of wealth for profit—must come, in the ordinary course of evolution, a system based on production for use—the system known as Socialism—such knowledge must grow and fructify, otherwise the negative attitude of antagonism to capitalism is injurious to the individual, either soon ending in sterility, or developing into an "idee fixe," with the unfortunate results of anarchy and chaos of intellect which such "fixed ideas" usually generate.

There is another fact to be taken into consideration. The mental process by which the opponent of capitalism becomes a Socialist is often retarded by his wandering after fallacious ideals. He is sometimes caught in the toils of the reformist parties, is mentally fleeced and plundered by one or other of the pseudo-Socialist organizations, and it is only after many false starts and much perturbation and disillusionment that by means of a process of deduction he eventually arrives at what the force of circumstances and the logical sequence of events urge and finally compel him to become, that is a class-conscious proletarian, with a historical sense of his place in nature and society, and a definite philosophical standpoint from which all phenomena can be judged and commended or condemned as the case may be—in short, a Socialist.

We have now arrived at the point where the Socialist, having evaded, or escaped from, the quicksands of pseudo-Socialism, has clearly realized the fact of his new theory of life, and has begun to take his part in the work of propaganda, which is so vital to the early and successful inauguration of the Socialist Commonwealth. There still remains, however, the need for unrelaxing vigilance in all that he thinks, or says, or does. While capitalism lasts the Socialist, who must of necessity live and work under the present system, is obliged, however much it goes against the grain, to accept, for all practical purposes, the morality of a system with which he finds himself totally at variance. Hence the paradox, that the Socialist, even while he is doing his utmost to overthrow a system which he hates, must at the same time act, to a very great extent, at any rate, in accordance with,

and adhere to, the conventions of that system.

It will be seen, therefore, that there is always a necessity for alertness, for a steadfastness of purpose, in the cause of Socialism, to militate against any possible undermining of the Socialist's principles. The Socialist, like any other member of the working class, has to live and work under capitalist conditions and has to conform, in the main, to the conventional morality of capitalism. But he must, at the same time, use every effort and take every opportunity to hasten the downfall of what has, in effect, become an obsolete social system, and to help inaugurate the next stage in the development of society.

One of the reasons of deflection from the principles of Socialism is to be found in the inability of certain superficial minds to build up, as it were, brick by brick, a philosophical structure, from whose topmost tower every hill and undulation of the workings of modern society can be surveyed. Unless the Socialist possesses a definite and unassailable point of view, it is really a misnomer to speak of him as a Socialist at all. He is simply one of those mental ineffectives who are always to be found attaching themselves to any unpopular cause and who, having no rock-bottomed principles, are easily swayed by any stronger personality with whom they happen to come in contact. If that stronger personality should be a direct or indirect agent of the capitalists, the result, of course, is the deviation from the Socialist cause to any passing craze, such as Woman's Suffrage, or Nationalization or something of that description. To such people capitalist environment is too strong to enable the somewhat vague and nebulous ideas they possess relating to Socialism to stand any chance of developing on right lines.

To the Socialist, to the man, that is, who has realized his position in nature and society, and who has built up for himself a philosophy of life in accordance with that realization, the questions that would have vexed and distracted him in the non-Socialist days have become simplified to an enormous degree. Whether it be in the ordinary routine of every-day affairs, or in the realms of literature, art, or science, his whole activities will be examined in the light of their value to Socialism; the facts appertaining to the present social system will be arraigned and judged at the bar of the Socialist philosophy, and the results used in the most effective way in criticising capitalism and advocating the establishment of the new order of society.

It is hoped that the foregoing will give some idea as to the making of Socialists, which, of course, is one of the main objects of the Socialist

LABOR DISPUTE IN SPAIN

MADRID, Oct. 27.—In retaliation for the lockout policy of the factory proprietors, the workmen in many of the factories refused to work today for more than six hours. This they are allowed to do under the law, which provided that when a lockout order is issued, the men may work shorter hours in order to give them time to find new positions.

EDUCATIONAL CLASSES

On another column, we publish the educational programme of the Comrades in Ontario. We would also like to hear from other points on progress. Prince Rupert has started a class known as the "Political Economy Club," commencing with twenty members. Vancouver classes are getting into their stride in good style.

INTERNATIONAL IN DEED

The Scandinavian unions have decided to lend German workingmen \$2,680,000, four-fifths from Sweden, three-tenths from Denmark and Norway each, to buy victuals in Scandinavian countries without loss from the rate of German money.

SAVAGES AND BARBARIANS

The theory of human degradation to explain the existence of savages and of barbarians, is no longer tenable. It came in as a corollary from the Mosaic cosmogeny, and was acquiesced in from a supposed necessity which no longer exists. As a theory, it is not only incapable of explaining the existence of savages, but it is without support in the facts of human experience.—Lewis H. Morgan, in his work, "Ancient Society."

THE STATE

With the rise of private property, and the right of inheritance connected with it, class distinctions and class antagonisms came into existence. In the course of time, the propertied members made common cause against the propertyless ones. The State came into existence as a necessary product of the new social order, based on conflicting interests.—Bebel.

Newsagents handling "The Indicator" in Vancouver, W. Love, next to Royal Theatre. Columbia News Agency, Columbia and Hastings, John Green, Carrall St., General Post Office News Agency, Granville St.

Party. The road to Socialism is a hard road, and perhaps this account of what is largely a personal experience may lend some assistance to those younger future comrades who are now groping more or less blindly toward the beacon—seen only by them at present as a faint and far-off glimmer—of the Socialist Commonwealth.—F. J. Webb, in Socialist Standard, London.