

Enlightening the American Public

IN order to get some idea of the problems or questions that are of chief interest to the people living at a certain period of history resort must be had to the popular literature or medium of news at their disposal. A glance at the headlines and subject matter of the papers circulated in the United States or elsewhere for that matter reveals the chief items of interest are High Cost of Living, Strikes, Government Ownership, Anti-Bolshevism, Shortage of Food, League of Nations, etc. It will be noticed that these are all matters of a political or economic character, and the aesthetic or cultural aspects of life are thrown aside or receive but scant attention, being limited in the realms of music to commercially inspired adulation of artists. In spite of this somewhat dreary and discordant aspect of the world's chief interest being concentrated on such topics, it is a peculiar thing to some people to observe so fine a writer and observer as Anatole France being so serenely hopeful of the aroused intelligence of the toilers.

Some few years ago a certain London daily paper remarked that the rich had sucked America dry of reason in so far as politics was concerned. The reason for this remark was due to the fact that at a certain political meeting in New York, a candidate had threatened to punch Mr. Pulitzer's head, this gentleman having been a prominent American journalist, and had apparently put some question up to the speaker which he could not answer. At the present time this observation from the London paper seems to be even more pertinent when the popular sources of information have to resort to verbal methods of the same character.

The Saturday Evening Post, which is probably the most widely circulated weekly American publication, and also carries an extensive assortment of advertising, may serve as an example of how the people receive ideas and the aid they have in assimilating them. In an editorial of Nov. 29, 1919, headed "Joy-riding and Joy-walking," this publication essays to show the folly of Government Ownership and radical ideas. Its first attempt is to make clear to us the "theory" of American Government, which was supposed to encourage individualism, which it asserts "develops a breed of strong, self-reliant, progressive freemen." But it would appear from the facts that the present day development has brought into existence beings who seek to remedy industrial evils by a resort to governmental machinery, which it seems "makes weaklings dependents, grafters, bureaucrats and deficits." The growing degeneracy of the American evidently tends to Government Ownership. However, the native born American may be sliding downwards, there is an even worse element, that which is labelled "red" or, "extremely radical." Listen: "The demand for Socialism has grown in proportion as the number of unassimilated aliens has increased." Now, you see we have the attention of the "sympathetic public," which is naturally "American," and it's pet "alien question" may serve to warn all right thinking people to look

around the corner and get its information at first hand. It is hardly worth while to point out that "aliens" in America have been assimilated "industrially," i.e., they were made to function in the realms of industry in the way they were intended, viz., as "wage-workers." In another article in this same journal appears a statement credited to parties who are not theorists, but practical organizers, that the foreign elements have been so assimilated that the American born gets away from the factories if he can not secure foremen's positions, and engages in commercial or clerical pursuits. It is one of the peculiarities of those who wish to upset the theoretical ideas of the Socialists to accuse them of being wedded to a "theory" to explain away problems, instead of getting down to the facts. Now it is a fact that a greater proportion of the "alien" element in America have a clearer grasp of economic questions than the average American, but it is not simply a question of his being "unassimilated" that causes the demand for Socialism. The great majority of immigrants into the United States came to better their economic condition on the strength of information they had received at home as to the conditions prevailing across the Atlantic. It is questionable if any great number had any more than a vague notion of radical ideas; in fact this S. E. P. writer charges they brought over vague ideas of a "worship of government." At any rate, it is more a question of why the superior governmental theories of their new country could not solve the problem of "assimilating" them. As a matter of fact, not theory, we maintain they were "assimilated" and now they are suffering from "indigestion" as well as the native born.

Now, according to this editorial, the solution of these disturbing questions is not to be found in the disputes of the learned, but all the necessary information can be secured by anyone just running around the corner and getting information first-hand. The prohibition question is cited as an example. However,—"The hard-headed man, who has studied the literature of the 'red' movement, knows it is based on fallacious theories and clever misrepresentation"—so this article concludes.

In Europe when Socialism was being actively propagated, an anti-Socialists organization was formed to send speakers out to combat the arguments of their opponents. To say that misrepresentation on both sides was not often resorted to, would label the contending parties as more than human. At any rate, a critical public was developed and mere vilification failed to secure much of a hearing. It will be well, therefore, to resort to some facts, to show the method by which the public receives its "facts."

It is claimed by the Socialists that society is divided into "classes." Their critics deny this and, as a reference to the papers, will indicate, whether those who deny know what they are saying or not. How often do you see such headlines as these: "Middle Class to Organize," "The Rich Feel the Burden of New Taxes,"

"Employers Will Not Arbitrate," "Workers Refuse to Carry On." Even in the same issue of the Saturday Evening Post we find an article headed "Germany in Transition," and from this we quote: "Instead of converting the sword into a ploughshare, Europe has turned from a war of force to a battle of CLASS, more subtle and dangerous." The question is what class or classes can there be any battles between in any modern nation? Have you not also had canvassers for local papers come around and tell you their particular paper catered for the "masses" and not the "classes." Just exactly what they mean it is sometimes hard to tell. Anyhow, it is an indication that an idea of a class or classes exists. This idea does not come out of the sky or of necessity from some defuded brain. It is a reflection caused by a common observation from experience—an experience gained by just "running out around the corner" of whatever part of the modern world one happens to live in. The most casual observation brings into consciousness this verifiable conclusion—property divides the human race into varying strata of living conditions and it is not alone the amount of wealth which determines the layer of society to which an individual belongs but HOW he obtains it. It is for this reason that many divisions or subdivisions appear in the TWO great classes that now prevail in all the highly-developed industrial nations. Even among the workers the way in which certain workers (for example those engaged in brain-work) are compelled to earn their livelihood, determines for them a certain standard of living, a cultural or non-cultural environment as the case may be, and we know that the idea of a class or classes exists, and we find that the correctness of the idea is verified by a reference to actual facts. But when we come to assert that a class war exists—i.e., a struggle between opposing classes—it is charged that this is a fiction. We turn to our papers and what is their great slogan, when they observe the much-ridiculed idea of the solidarity of labor taking a definite and conscious shape? "Compromise!" What is there to compromise, if there is no struggle? Is there nothing to compromise? Most certainly there is now. A few years ago—not so very man years ago it was from the ranks of labor one heard the principle of compromise advocated,—the plaint of the weak to the strong. Today we find the organs of apologetic capitalism are being read sceptically by the citizens of the world. The property squabbles over the Peace Treaty and League of Nations has revealed somewhat the "idealism" of the "saviours of civilization" and the splendid energy released by Russia in a revolutionary impulse to better economic conditions has been scandalously libelled by the press agents of this Brotherhood of National Redeemers. What sort of information do our hard-headed citizens get from their forts of wisdom? Records of incidents of violence, premature reports of anti-Bolshevik setbacks—no word of the hidden intrigues of outside parties interested, not in the people of Russia, but in their economic wealth; no word

of the desertion and sabotage of the skilled or semi-skilled executive section against the interest of the majority of the people; no publicity given to the actual propaganda of this people striving to settle their problems. Even should the alleged atrocities perpetrated in Russia be correct—is any comparison of the lives lost over the great economic war just concluded by the capitalist governments any great matter for exultation by the champions of "law and order," especially when viewed besides the thrifty schemes for reconstruction of the workers now so much ventilated in this altruistic era. Why should a press that professes to be so interested in the people understanding "facts" not circulate them widely, so they can be common knowledge. They are quite willing to advertise anything "for sale," and the "wets" of all newspaper writers are for sale and the market determines what is bought, and sold. Certain "facts" can be sold if done up in the proper package and the presentation of certain "facts" can be labelled "seditious" and in the hands of some prove that the way a man makes his living determines his strata in society and the conditions under which he may be allowed to live.

All of which goes to show that theories should be resolved from an observation of facts and that it is the observation or experience of certain commonly experienced facts that urges men to act along certain lines and which is the only way to understand why the "demand for Socialism has grown," and why the middle class, with a certain amount of support from the misinformed section of the workers have got the confused notion that Government Ownership is Socialism. A little more analysis of the urge towards this particular solution will soon divorce the minds of the workers from this notion and in the not very distant future it will not come as a surprise to find the Saturday Evening Post, (just for an example) boosting this Governmental idea as very sound compared with the programme that the working-class will eventually be launched into.

—H. W.

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

Reports from Soviet Russia show that the industrial and agricultural population are working with might and main in the production of goods, realizing that the success of the new order and of the Red armies depend upon their efforts. Wherever the Red army captures new territory, the workers rush the work in factory and field, whereas, when under the counter-revolutionary generals they slacken their activities.

MANIFESTO OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

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. Send them in.