

Western Clarion

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EXIT.

FOR SOME time it has been apparent that the end has been in sight and now it is here. With this issue we write Amen. If there is a surprising feature in it at all it lies not in the fact of our exit at this time but in that we have survived until now after twenty-odd years of opinionatedness vehemently expressed and modified, when at all, very reluctantly under pressure from time and events.

In the early years of the party's history we laid down our attitude in very positive terms to a somewhat obedient if rather uncritical audience, our geographical position and the state of development of the country we found ourselves in helping us along encouragingly. The outside world laid its claims lightly upon us as far as concerned the sores of its everyday life and we were able to develop propaganda of a general nature and application, cultivating, meanwhile, as suited our circumstances, a flirting acquaintance with theory in the field of sociology through the well known works of, mainly, Marx and Engels and others whose work had found incitement from them.

Whereas in other countries socialist propaganda endeavor in our time was identified mainly as a sort of aggressive politics ours, as befitted the circumstances, frankly assumed the educational role discovering the importance of economics, the all-important lesson of which to the working class lay in uncovering the process of exploitation at the point of production—all other working-class ills being dependent upon that while they lasted. In passing it will do no harm to emphasize the pressing need for a little more application of that doctrine here and elsewhere. The world has turned its attention to practical problems and the working-class has gone with it. The current carrying human affairs needs a little more attention than it receives if it is to be ridden successfully. We have given it too much attention, they say, but if so we have doubtless been encouraged by those who have given it too little.

Our party story is variously set forth throughout this issue by others of us who have been actively identified with the party's history in past years. As befits the uncertain attitude we have confessedly voiced in recent years as a political party we have surrendered whatever intolerance may remain to such of our friends as may lay claim to it. As befits that attitude also it is appropriate that we should express individual points of view concerning our demise and other things. One thing we would wish to say is that no one in particular is responsible. Our friend "C" (C. Stephenson, "by the way," a former "Clarion" editor and editor also of "The Red Flag" and of "The Indicator," the two last mentioned having succeeded one another following the suspension at Censor's orders of the "Clarion" in the troublous late war years)—our friend "C" is widely claimed as the culprit, whereas he is simply doing his best to cultivate a receptive habit of mind and has become a trifle overemphatic in recommending like effort to others. In any case, whereas he wrote a mile of manuscript, responsibility for its printing rests upon him who descends from this cross with this last issue. Besides, the Family Journal had quit paying its way before "C" bought his gallon of ink.

Enough of such like interpretations of our own history anyway. The popular course was never open to us; how could it be with such as ourselves whose impulse is to hunt for causes and not to register grief over their ill effects? If we have in our old age somewhat diversified the causes we have only responded to the modern habit of specialization and we are not even to be numbered with the chorus.

There is with us still loyalty to our old attitudes even if, for various reasons real and apparent, our traditional air of learning has been stirred. But since the Russian revolution of 1917 the modern socialist movement has had a chance to rediscover itself, even if it has suffered discomfort in the process, and in saying that it is well, if uncommon, to include Russia itself. It might be said now almost with hope of recruiting an encouraging listener that there is no "only way" and never has been, and that theoretical considerations in any body of doctrine economic or political, or both, are subject to object lessons wherever they apply. Some years, however, had to pass to recruit that listener who, likely as not, is now and probably for some time shall be indifferent because, being human, his former hopes remain unrealized and he finds it difficult—as do we all—to lend hospitality to any threatened change of mind.

In days gone by our existence has been threatened by one wave of enthusiasm and another from time to time. Any political party of the working class depends upon enthusiasts whose energies and zeal may be invoiced at all times in the party interest. But in those days gone by, when all is said and done, our membership or that portion of it which lent itself to wider activities among the working class—trades and industrial unionism of one sort or another—simply sought an outlet for its energies and an avenue of escape for its enthusiasm which we could not provide. Many members left us later over the Third International affair to join another party, as much—though some of them may not have known it—as much because they saw or thought they saw a chance to be active in disposing of their energy as for any other reason. We simply could not provide an outlet for them; we could not order them around and most of them craved a chance to obey somebody. For ourselves, in spite of much argument, spoken and written, it was a foregone conclusion that we could not surrender our judgment to any body, international or otherwise, and a split was inevitable and occurred. It followed naturally that since for the working class the world over the centre of attraction as the active stage was Russia, cool judgment and examination took second place to enthusiasm, to the point almost of expiral.

It is too much experience the world has had crammed into a few short years for it to understand its full import in the same space of time. The world-wide socialist movement is today quite unlike what it was ten or twelve years ago; its problems are discussed in different terms and the course of its development in that time has made it so. It has had more advertisement for good or ill in that space of time than in the past fifty years. Its identity is almost lost now, in spite of the tenacity of its still remaining small but vigorous warring sects, as the isolated and exclusive custodian of its own precepts. Any healthy set of precepts is bound to come into its own some day and the fibre of Marxism nowadays appears in a literature widely spread and that not alone in academic bowers. Indeed, a materialist interpretation of current history is to be found in the foreign correspondence columns of any half decently dressed newspaper these days, and people are about at the stage where they are used to it, though they would give it a wide berth as a suggested substitute for their own pet theories, mostly inherited. The ways of the world in time temper all pet notions and we must not be surprised when our turn comes round. Nevertheless, the Socialists have arrived, but at that point where their identity is almost lost in the crowd, even though the crowd's responses to the same or similar circumstances may express themselves at times at cross purposes with the rote. The crowd has a great deal to learn from us and we too have a great deal to learn from the crowd. Looking

backward, we seem to have been strangers not knowing one another's ways.

So we pass out. They say the Family Journal will be missed, but the number of those who may miss it will not be legion. So far as we are able to judge no resurrection is possible, and certainly no resurrection is possible on any uncertain basis of political expression.

If a personal note might be forgiven by the hard-shelled ones who very properly hold all sentimental expression in disdain, we would record our admiration for the kind tolerance of our brother writers whose work we have appreciated and respected. The Socialist movement has always contrived the journals of its expression under difficulty and the "Clarion" has been no exception to the rule. Our writers have had to mix their writings with the fears and joys of work and wages, and have given up many a much needed idle hour to the claims of the "Clarion" readers in which they have been, one and all, as able as they have been willing. To our readers then, we say farewell, having performed our task as long as circumstances would allow and as well as we were able.

BRYAN

THE obituary notices concerning the late Wm. Jennings Bryan, have been almost contemptuous in the daily press. Not often are the dead at once subject to outspoken criticism. His last marquerade in Tennessee seems to have been taken seriously only by the court judge in Dayton, who, by the way, was not called upon by virtue of his office to weigh the respective claims and merits of science and religion but merely to set forth his findings in state law—which he did, against Stopes who was perfectly well aware that he could not avoid breaking that law even had he been willing, which he was not.

Concerning Bryan at Dayton, Joseph Wood Krutch in "The Nation" (N.Y.) has this to say following the speech of Malone in defence:—

"A dormant sense of fair play had turned even the fundamentalists for an instant against their leader, and the applause which broke forth, twice as great in volume and duration as that which had greeted Bryan, showed conclusively that in this particular duel Mr. Bryan had lost even in the midst of his own camp. It seemed almost true that, as Mr. Mencken, seated behind me, excitedly exclaimed, 'Tennessee needs only fifteen minutes of free speech to become civilized.'

"For a moment one was almost sorry for the great leader who had fallen, so low. Driven from politics and journalism because of obvious intellectual incompetence, become ballyhoo for boom-town real estate in his search for lucrative employment, and forced into religion as the only quasi-intellectual field in which mental backwardness and complete insensibility to ideas can be used as an advantage, he already knows that he is compelled to seek in the most remote rural regions for the applause so necessary to his contentment. Yet even in Dayton, as choice a stronghold of ignorance and bigotry as one could hope to find, he goes down in defeat in the only contest where he has met his antagonists face to face. For a moment, as I said, one pities him and yet such pity is, of course, not really called for. Even as he loses he wins; no argument and real victory was needed."

A GLANCE BACK—AND A FORECAST

(Continued from page 2)

Its vision of the future will be used to make present activity significant. It will concentrate on the crucial points of its contemporary life, on that living zone where the present is passing into the future. There is the region where thought and action count. Too far ahead there is nothing but your dream, just behind there is nothing but your memory. But in the unfolding present man can be creative if his vision is gathered from the promise of actual things."

Well, good-bye, old Clarion! Old unique! Its company of readers, good-bye! The Demos disbands us!

Comrades: If our cause seems set back, the brave voice of Leigh Hunt inspires from another era of reaction and laissez-faire;

"In such an age as this the world requires the example of a spirit not so prostrate as its own, to make it believe that all hearts are not alike kept under, and that the hope of reformation is not every where given up."