

## BOOK REVIEW.

### THE BRASS CHECK: UPTON SINCLAIR: PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

OWING to the fact that the American working animal is beginning to show signs of being just about fed up with the dope peddled by the one hundred per cent. capitalist newspapers and magazines, and as there is grave danger that he may soon cease to absorb such high explosives altogether, and begin to study his own class literature, and his own class position, and as such a catastrophe must be prevented at all costs, it is suggested, by certain persons (whose chief function in life is that of leading wage-slaves down a blind alley), that the percentage should be reduced considerably, in order that the dose may be more palatable.

Upton Sinclair has written a new book entitled "The Brass Check," with the sub-title "A Study of American Journalism." Also an article in "The Nation," of February 7th, under the title "Building an Honest Newspaper," which is a kind of advertisement of the book.

In "The Nation" article, Upton tells us that after twenty years of experience with American journalism, he has at last come to the conclusion that the capitalist newspapers and magazines are not telling us the truth. But we will let him speak for himself.

"American newspapers and magazines are great capitalist institutions, operated under the capitalist system, and in the interest of that system, serving private and not public interests. . . . The masses of the American people are today fed upon capitalist propaganda in the guise of news. News is the raw material of thought, and until the people have honest news, they cannot be expected to do any intelligent thinking whatever."

Now this is a most remarkable and original discovery, and we cannot imagine how Upton Sinclair ever guessed it, even after twenty years' experience. It will undoubtedly go down in the pages of history as one of the great discoveries of the twentieth century. But great theories never come singly, so Upton has another bright idea, he has a cure for all this. He says:

"If I had an editorial staff, some trained investigators, and the names of trustworthy correspondents in strategic places, I could dig out stories of such sensational interest as would stir the American people to their depths. Ten years ago this was being done by a dozen big magazines, and now it is not being done by a single one. Why? The big magazines have been bought by the big interests, and the 'muck-rakers' have been turned out to silence or the soap box. . . . Now I make an appeal to my fellow men and women for a new standard of journalism: a newspaper which is published, not to make money, but to convey information. . . . For a start of the enterprise, I propose an executive board consisting of from twenty to twenty-five members, persons who have proved by life-long service that they believe in the truth, and are willing to stand by the truth. These people should belong to every shade of liberal thought. Purely by way of illustration, to show the type of person intended, I name twenty-three who happen to live in or near New York, and whom I should invite: Allen Benson, Alice Stone Blackwell, Arthur Bullard, Harriet Stanton Blatch, William C. Bullitt, Herbert Croly, Max Eastman, William Hard, Mrs. J. Borden Harriman, Rev. John Haynes Holmes, Hamilton Holt, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Paul Kellogg, Amos Pinchot, Charles Edward Russell, Lincoln Steffens, J. G. Phelps Stokes, Ida Tarbell, Col. William Boyce Thompson, Samuel Untermyer, Frank A. Vanderlip, Oswald Garrison Villard, Stephen S. Wise."

Anyone who has followed the career of some of the individuals here mentioned, for the last three or four years, will have an idea of the brand of "honest news" we may expect to find in a paper published by them. We are willing to take Upton's word for it, that they represent "every shade of liberal thought." But to make sure that we get the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, we would suggest that Bill Haywood and John Spargo be added to the above list of twenty-three to make up the full twenty-five, then we will be sure to get the truth from all angles. But there is still one difficulty. He says:

"The question is: could such people work together? Would it be possible for any newspaper policy to be satisfactory to them all? The newspaper I am planning will publish no editorials. So it is not a question of getting these twenty-three men to agree upon a policy concerning Russia or concerning the I. W. W. The only policy they have to consider is the policy of the National news; and that policy will be a fair chance for every man to be heard."

There we are. Now where are we? In the first place the proposed name of the paper is significant. It gives us an idea of what the policy will be provided of course, that the executive board can agree upon a policy. It will be National Liberalism. There

will be no editorials, so there is no chance of a fight on the editorial page. With regard to the news, we are not sure that "capitalist propaganda in the guise of news," is any worse than "stories of such sensational interest as would stir the American people to their depths." Ten years ago a dozen big magazines were telling such stories. Yes! and how much good has it done the working class? Remember all, or nearly all, of the 100% capitalist newspapers and magazines are labelled these days. Now when we come across a bottle of liquid, labelled wood-alcohol, we do not drink it, or if we do drink it, we know what we are drinking, and what the effect will be. But when we get a certain percentage of wood alcohol mixed with our cider, we do not know what we are drinking, we do not know what the effects will be, consequently we are more likely to drink it, and that is precisely why it is mixed. Let the capitalist press remain 100% capitalist propaganda. Let the working class build up a press that will be 100% working-class education. Let the class lines be clearly drawn. And watch the result.

Upton tells us in his book (page 243) that the "Star," a Seattle newspaper, "was willing to lose thirty-five thousand readers in order to smash the Seattle strike." Very good, if "capitalist propaganda in the guise of news," is willing to drive away thirty-five thousand readers from one paper, in order to smash one strike, then what we require is Socialist papers ready to teach those workers their class position, as soon as they become disgusted with 100% capitalism. But we do not require an "honest newspaper" that will tell them stories of such sensational interest as would stir them to their depths, and lead them off on another wild-goose chase.

So much for Upton's theory of an "honest newspaper," now for his book "The Brass Check." In our opinion it would have been more appropriately, although less sensationally named, if it had been called "The Failure of a Reformer." It is 448 pages of proof that any attempt to reform the capitalist system, is an absolute waste of time. For this reason, and the fact that it contains a considerable amount of information regarding the tactics and methods of modern journalism, it is well worth reading. Let there be no misunderstanding. Although Upton Sinclair calls himself a Socialist at times, he is far from it, as the above quotations show. He is now, and always has been, a nationalist, a reformer, and a sensational muck-raker, as his own book proves. Before the war he was a radical. During the war he was a patriot, and wrote a story to "win the Socialists to the idea of supporting the war," (p. 207). After the war he "went back into the radical camp." (Page 206). There is not one sentence in the whole book that advocates sound scientific Socialist education for the workers. But there are many sentences that advocate an "honest newspaper" of the type mentioned above. On page 414 appears a paragraph that would almost lead one to the conclusion that he had at last seen the error of his ways, but his appeal to a bunch of freaks to help establish an "honest newspaper" proves the contrary. The paragraph we have in mind reads: "For twenty years I have been a voice crying in the wilderness of industrial America; pleading for kindness to our laboring-classes pleading for common honesty and truth-telling, so that we might choose our path wisely, and move by peaceful steps into the new industrial order. I have seen my pleas ignored and my influence destroyed, and now I see the stubborn pride and insane avarice of our money-masters driving us straight to the precipice of revolution. What shall I do? What can I do—save to cry out one last warning in this last fateful hour? The time is almost here—and ignorance, falsehood, cruelty, greed and lust of power were never stronger in the hearts of the ruling class in history than they are in those who constitute the Invisible Government of America today."

Such is the result of twenty years of reforming and much muck-raking. Now to show that there is no hard feeling, we would advise anyone who can spare the money, and who would like to have a line on reform tactics, and the corruption of American journalism, to buy the book and read it, the price is single copy, paper cover, 50c postpaid; cloth \$1.00, American money; published by the author at Pasadena, California.

In the publishers note, the author tells us that: "If the great mass of the people ever hear of the

book, it will be because you, the reader, do your part." We take this opportunity to announce that we have done our part to make Upton's book and his theory of an "honest newspaper" popular, and if they do not meet with the success he expects, our conscience is clear anyhow.

F. J. McNEY.

## Literature Price List

- Communist Manifesto. Single copies, 10c; 25 copies, \$2.00.  
Wage-Labor and Capital. Single copies, 10c; 25 copies, \$2.00.  
The Present Economic System. (Prof. W. A. Bonger). Single copies, 10c; 25 copies, \$1.50.  
Capitalist Production. (First Nine and 32nd Chapters, "Capital," Vol. I. Marx). Paper, single copies, 50c; cloth, single copies, \$1.00; cloth, 10 copies, 75c each.  
Socialism, Utopian and Scientific. Single copies, 15c; 25 copies, \$3.25.  
Slave of the Farm. Single copies, 10c; 25 copies, \$1.50.  
Manifesto, S. P. of C., single copy, 10 cents; 25 copies, \$1.50.  
Red Europe. (F. Anstey, M.P.). Single copies, 50c. Ten copies or more 30c each.  
The Story of the Evolution of Life. (T. F. Palmer). Single copies, 10c.  
Evolution of Man. (Prof. Bolsche). Single copies, 20c; 25 copies, \$3.75.  
The Nature and Uses of Sabotage (Prof. T. Veblen). Single copies 5 cents, 25 copies \$1.  
Red Heart of Russia. (Bessie Beattie). Per copy, \$2.00.  
Ten Days that Shook the World. (John Reed). Per copy, \$2.00.  
Six Red Months in Russia. (Louise Bryant). Per copy, \$2.00.

(All above post free).

Ancient Society. (Morgan). Per copy (postage 14c extra), \$1.50.

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## PLATFORM

### Socialist Party of Canada

We, the Socialist Party of Canada, affirm our allegiance to, and support of, the principles and programme of the revolutionary working class.

Labor, applied to natural resources, produces all wealth. The present economic system is based upon capitalist ownership of the means of production, consequently, all the products of labor belong to the capitalist class. The capitalist is, therefore, master; the worker a slave.

So long as the capitalist class remains in possession of the reins of government all the powers of the State will be used to protect and defend its property rights in the means of wealth production and its control of the product of labor.

The capitalist system gives to the capitalist an ever-swelling stream of profits, and to the worker, an ever-increasing measure of misery and degradation.

The interest of the working class lies in setting itself free from capitalist exploitation by the abolition of the wage system, under which this exploitation, at the point of production, is cloaked. To accomplish this necessitates the transformation of capitalist property in the means of wealth production into socially controlled economic forces.

The irrespressible conflict of interest between the capitalist and the worker necessarily expresses itself as a struggle for political supremacy. This is the Class Struggle.

Therefore, we call all workers to organize under the banner of the Socialist Party of Canada, with the object of conquering the political powers, for the purpose of setting up and enforcing the economic programme of the working class, as follows:

1. The transformation, as rapidly as possible, of capitalist property in the means of wealth production (natural resources, factories, mills, railroads, etc.) into collective means of production.
2. The organization and management of industry by the working class.
3. The establishment, as speedily as possible, of production for use instead of production for profit.