

The Oriental Problem in B. C.

THE Board of Trade conference in Vancouver is endeavoring to scare the life out of us with "their" problem of the Orientals in B. C. When the introduction of Oriental Labor was considered desirable to fight the labor problem some years ago, this august body of citizens did not talk of the "threat of the Oriental penetration." What then has caused the alarm?

In an editorial in the Vancouver World, of February 6th, we find that the labor difficulty was solved O.K. "But the penetration continues in a larger and more menacing form." In fact this menace is in the form of a threat—a peculiar form of threat—a threat to buy something. Isn't that a peculiarly alarming situation? Who is scared by this threatened purchase—the sellers—oh, no—every citizen!! All the elements of a problem and one disturbing factor eliminated this time, viz., labor. The editorial continues: "The best known fruit ranch in the province is threatened with purchase and subdivision under Japanese auspices. The subject no longer concerns labor alone, but has become of vital urgency to every citizen."

On another page of this same newspaper the Japanese Consul denies that such a threat has been made in the way of buying the Coldstream Ranch, the property referred to. Maybe the owners of the property in question are none too pleased with the final outcome of the "threat to purchase," as the question of who pays the price so long as it is paid naturally does not worry the business man. The menace of course is "Japanese" capital, and it's threat to certain small interests in the Province.

This subject which has become of vital urgency to every citizen is selected simply to show the hypocritical method of presentation characteristic of the small trader who always wants to "hide his light under a bushel"—i.e., the real problem as it affects him. How does he proceed? We must consider the sections of the community that have to be interested. First of all there is the "labor" element to whom the Oriental question has always been a bugbear. The shortsightedness of employers in the past in connection with immigration regulations are therefore trotted out, but, it is asserted that labor has triumphed over this difficulty "by ruthless pressure against firms and individuals who employed the Asiatic." There you see now how the problem "no longer concerns labor alone." It has been solved on paper and the Asiatic laborer is non est in B. C.!! Yet in the close of this same editorial we find references to an unsettled immigration agreement with Japan.

The next bunch to be considered are of a variegated hue and as the editorial writer evidently could not find the social categories the residue of democracy comprised—"the people" in general were to be interested. What can we interest them in?—their superior civilization, hygiene, religious traditions and "the flow of our national life," and the conclusion of the comparison is that "the two races cannot co-exist in a national sense." Surely, they must be worse than the Bolsheviks. It is admitted the Japanese have certain virtues—such as frugality and industry, which of course is also what we desire amongst "our" people, i.e., our working people. The Japanese Consul referring to the "alleged Japanese menace" by a presentation of facts shows the absurdity of the claims of superiority, and he evidently knows full well that those who write comparisons of Japanese standards of living are always taking the lower standard of the Japanese laborer. The concern over the hygiene conditions in railroad construction camps, logging camps, and mining districts did not disturb our virtuous citizens so long as they were not compelled to live under such conditions.

The question that is kept in the background is the "property" envy of the little business man, and the same concern over the Japanese did not develop in California until the "frugality and industry" of the Japanese ranchers began to be felt by the native ranchers. The Japanese laborer here is exploited under the wage system just the same as his superior Anglo-Saxon brother, and if any syndicate can ex-

plot his energy to better advantage on the land not only will Japanese capitalists be looking for him but also the Canadian capitalist. The "white hopes" who look likely subjects for the same process to the critical eye of the employer will not be overlooked. Even in the issue of the "World" referred to, appears a news item to the effect that Hindus are employing "white men" in B. C.

Such are the problems (?) of Democracy with their "inferior race" twaddle.

....H. W.

The Use of the Vote

PERHAPS no wider views exist among radicals than on the question of the vote. The simon-pure industrial-actionist emphatically has no use for it, and many who call themselves political-actionists, but who are merely parliamentarians, consider the vote to be the only possible revolutionary weapon. The Marxian Socialist is a revolutionary political-actionist, and to him the vote is only one form of political action, but nevertheless a very essential one.

An act is political if its purpose and effect are political; that is, if the laws of the country or the form of government are changed thereby, and in the latter case, the act would be revolutionary. When the peasants of England in 1381 rose in revolt against their feudal lords and marched en masse before the king, demanding release from personal obligation to their lords and recognition of their status as "freemen," their act was certainly political, and when the king acceded to their demands, they had won a sweeping political victory, notwithstanding the fact that not a single vote was cast on the question.

If we analyze the origin and significance of the vote, we will find it much easier to appreciate its value. There was a time in human society when differences of opinion were invariably settled by physical combat, and the winning side forced its desires upon the weaker faction. But later, this system of head-cracking often gave way to the less exciting method of head-counting, and the losing side if hopelessly outnumbered, was content to abide by the result. Thus we see that the vote is merely a measure or expression of strength.

Naturally, one would suppose that when a man is voting he knows what he is voting about and certainly that he is voting for his own benefit. So that in any country today where the working-class comprise nearly the whole of the population, and the propertied class but a small fraction, we should wonder why everything is not done and run for the convenience and pleasure of the many, for have they not the strength to enforce their desires? The truth is, they have no desire to be other than they are, or at any rate the notion prevails that there is equal opportunity for all, and that a man needs only to be thrifty and persevering to come out on top. Only a few comparatively are class-conscious, and only a few of these really understand the underlying causes of social development, and know the forces which the workers as a class will have to overcome to establish themselves as rulers of society.

The Marxian Socialist holds that the capitalists maintain their position principally by means of organized power, i.e., the State, and that such power is supplied by members of the working class, and is available only through the ignorance of that class. Destroy that ignorance, substitute therefore a realisation of the class nature of capitalist society, and the workers then constitute a force which practically nothing can check.

We must remember that every capitalist country was virtually compelled to give the franchise to the proletariat in order to insure its support, but so cleverly and insistently have the bourgeois intellectuals preached the gospel of "democracy" and of equality of opportunity that the vote has always been used by the workers to advance the interests of some section of the class above them, instead of their own. It is therefore the first object of Marxists to give the worker that knowledge by which he can make intelligent use of the franchise.

"But," we hear someone say, "do you suppose the capitalists will let themselves be voted out of

business? Long before that point arrives, they will have withdrawn the franchise from the workers."

"Let them do it," we say. They would face a dilemma just as terrifying as they face today in regard to the recognition of Soviet Russia: to make peace with Russia means the speedy spread of her Communistic principles, but to make war on her very possibly means the revolt of their own working class. It is inconceivable that any capitalist government (even the U. S.) would be so foolhardy or so short-sighted as to long check the political expression of the working class, even if it assume a class-conscious aspect: they would only be proving the shallowness and empty pretense of their democratic forms.

In the process of awakening the proletariat, political campaigns and elections are of invaluable aid. The election of candidates who are thoroughly under the control of the party, as are the Socialist deputies recently elected to the Italian parliament, enables the workers to more publicly dissect and expose the hypocritical nature of all capitalist institutions. Mass action may sound very alluring as advocated by some so-called Communists, but the Marxist sees no particular benefit in stirring the mob to action. If the knowledge is possessed by a sufficient number of workers they will need no stirring; and in the meantime, while the number of clear visioned workers is small, educational methods are the only ones that enable us to make any progress.

A.C.

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