

Working Class Parties

By J. A. McDONALD

NOTHING better illustrates the political immaturity of the workers than the gullibility they display in the face of social and economic issues. Only that which triumphs, even for the moment, is considered worthy of serious attention. Many thousands flocked to the standard of Bolshevism solely because of the fact that it attained the status of a ruling entity. As a social-economic theory, it could claim some adherents among students, but the masses could not be attracted until the Soviet State was organized as a going concern.

Similarly in the case of the British Labor Party. During the many years this group remained in the shades of the opposition its programme and officialdom met with nothing resembling universal acclaim. Very few, in the ranks of the Colonial workers, gave thought to its platform and aspirations. It was regarded as merely an opposition party which could not enlist attention until it reached the threshold of power or, at least, of office.

No sooner, however, had McDonald and his cohorts kissed the hand of the king and settled down to the position of administering social affairs than the applause of the multitude resounded throughout the earth. In the opinion of many the millennium had arrived for British workers. The poverty-stricken outcasts, who were formerly submerged socially and economically, were now to be placed on a basis of equality with the social élite.

The sloppy, reform Socialist and labor groups in all countries looked upon the inception of the British Labor Government as the logical stepping stone to progressive dominance in all lands. Capitalist society had reached the stage of dissolution in Britain and could no longer be counted upon to register a comeback, and have one of its political mouthpieces in charge of national legislation.

The Labor Government came, stayed for ten months, and departed, without even knocking a splinter off the social base. Capitalism was never challenged in its whole tenure of office. On the contrary, the labor leaders soon proved themselves to be adroit champions of the very system they were supposed to rout or, at least, modify. They stepped into the front benches with the idea of maintaining and extending British Imperialism uppermost in their minds. Even many members of the nobility and aristocracy were agreeably surprised at the conservative attitude taken by the heads of the new administration.

There was no necessity for any alarm from the very start. Even the "theory men" among them soon forgot their past indiscreet references to the class struggle, in the few instances where such were made, and now found it incumbent upon them to explain away all class distinctions and show to the masses that no one section of society could be catered to at the expense of the rest.

Sydney Webb, one of the intellectuals, and a member of the new government, states: "During the last few years this party (Labor Party) has enrolled bishops, peers, landowners, bankers, and not a few manufacturers and other employers of labor." Where could room be found for a class struggle in the midst of this motley crew? A party of all the talents was surely the result. Capitalism need not suffer any fainting spells while this conglomeration presided over its destiny.

Philip Snowden, another of the social innovators and theoreticians, who was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, had this to say at the banquet given annually by the Lord Mayor of London to himself, the merchants and the Bank of England: "Although I belong to a political party which is supposed neither to know nor to care anything about the national credit, I can assure you that there never has been in office a Chancellor of the Exchequer who appreciated more highly than I that a Chancellor's first duty is to do nothing which will in the slightest degree result in a loss of confidence in the national credit."

Doesn't that sound progressive? Even revolutionary eh? No, no, these folk are not our rivals. They are simply our associates, working along slightly different lines to reach the same goal—the social ownership and control of the means of production. What a gullible lot of mortals we must be to swallow such a potion.

MacDonald, the Prime Minister, justified his attitude in supporting the bill to provide more dreadnoughts and cruisers for the British navy by asserting that such a programme would mean more jobs for the British workers. This, of course, would apply not only to the process of construction but also to the operation of these battleships after they are built. There is nothing equal to a good war in the matter of curtailing unemployment.

At the last Labor Party Conference, MacDonald referred to the fact that many called his Government Socialist instead of Labor. He deprecated the designation and pointed out that the term Socialist left a sort of a revolutionary taste in the mouth that was not conducive to harmonious social relations.

Now, what attitude should a Socialist Party take toward this gang of "Bourgeois Democrats"? In fact what other stand could we take but one of relentless opposition? No words of mine can more accurately describe the Socialist position toward such a clique than those of the present Editor of the "Clarion" in his secretarial notes in "Clarion" No. 819 (May 16th, 1920). Here they are:

"Some surprise has been occasioned the Dominion Labor Party by the refusal of Whittier-Low of the S. P. of C. to co-operate with them in the Manitoba Provincial Elections to be conducted this summer. The D. L. P. evidently does not yet understand that we do not stand for the reform of any institution under capitalism—not even the criminal code. Our activities have always been directed towards the complete overthrow of capitalism, and to that end we have concentrated our attention upon the education of our fellow men who are engaged in wealth production, and who are exploited in the process. Our educational policy is based entirely upon an explanation of the historical process of man's development, and of the situation in which he finds himself today, so that he may understand the events with which he is immediately connected, and the underlying causes of their being. No party or organization which devotes itself to what it considers to be the proper readjustment of the tailends of capitalist entanglements can have alliance with us. Sometimes it is very hard to distinguish the difference between the right wing of labor and the left wing of the bourgeoisie. The Dominion Labor Party occupies what is to us an unhabitable house."

That is, indeed, the only possible position for us to take. As Socialists our function must be to teach Socialism; to organize our class for the abolition of capitalism and the introduction of a new social system where those who produce shall also own. To accomplish this end we can countenance no open compromises or clandestine arrangements with those groups representing, either consciously or unconsciously, the ruling class. We must oppose and expose them. We must clear the social atmosphere instead of obscuring it. We must maintain our revolutionary programme in the face of all odds and conditions.

As we have seen the appellation—labor—does not signify that the party is carrying on propaganda on behalf of the working class in opposition to those who own and rule. It is merely a fascinating title made use of by political adventurers to secure the continued enslavement of the workers and consequently maintain intact the present mode of exploitation.

There is no necessity for the Socialist to misrepresent labor parties or picture them as being anything else but what they are. An explanation of fact is all that is required. We place them on the dissecting table and diagnose the cure in the light of science. It will be seen that they have all the symptoms of capitalist tools. Let us treat them as such, and do away with the need of continuing a policy of obscurity, evasion, and circumlocution.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE VARIOUS COUNTRIES.

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unemployment, 11 per cent. were unemployed at the end of November against 11.1 per cent. in the previous month, and 11.5 per cent. at the end of November, 1923. The number of registered unemployed was on December 15th, 1,158,000.

Holland.—Labour Exchanges of municipalities with over 5000 inhabitants had on their books on November 29th 36,740 skilled workers applying for vacancies, and 29,000 unskilled. It should, however, be noted that not all of the persons registered as applicants for vacancies are unemployed, and that some of the unskilled workers are doing part-time work. Of the 252,077 members of the Unemployment Fund Centres which receive State grants, 16,499 or 6.5 per cent. were wholly unemployed, and 5,161, or 2.1 per cent. were doing part time work, against 3.8 or 2 per cent. in the previous month, and 10.3 and 2.4 per cent. at the end of October, 1925.

Hungary.—At the end of October, 13.5 per cent. of the trade union members were unemployed, against 26,020 or 13.5 per cent. at the end of September, and 28,801 or 15 per cent., at the end of August.

Italy.—The number of persons registered as wholly unemployed was at the end of October, 117,051, and those doing part-time work 17,668, against 115,590 and 21,176 in the previous month, and 199,694 and 75,810 respectively in October, 1923.

Latvia.—The official statistics for the five largest towns of Latvia show that the number of registered unemployed on the 1st December, 1924, was 2,477, against 1,316 on September 1st last. In reality, however, the number of unemployed is much larger than represented by the official statistics.

Norway.—On December 10th, the number of unemployed was 20,500, against 16,300 in the previous month, and 18,500 on the 10th December, 1923. These figures do not include the persons employed on relief work, the number of whom is estimated at about 6,000, against about 9,000 in November, 1923.

Poland.—At the end of September, there were 155,245 unemployed against 159,820 in the previous month, and 52,420 at the end of September, 1923.

Roumania.—As there is no State unemployment insurance or unemployment benefit in Roumania, there are no statistics of the unemployed. All the towns, however, report unanimously that the number of unemployed has increased very alarmingly.

Russia.—According to official statistics, the number of registered unemployed for all the various states which form part of the Union of Soviet Republics, had in June, 1924, increased to 1,300,000.

Sweden.—Of the 205,605 members of those trade unions which send in reports on unemployment, there were on October 31st 17,344 unemployed, or 8.4 per cent. against 7 per cent. in the previous month, and 8.2 per cent. in October, 1923. The total number of unemployed in the whole country is estimated at from 20,000 to 30,000.

Switzerland.—The number of registered applicants for work was at the end of October, 9,451, against 8,718 in the previous month. In October, 1923, when state benefit was still being paid to unemployed, 24,012 persons were on the register.

U. S. A.—According to a report published by the Department of Labor, on the basis of 8,768 concerns in 52 industries, employing 2,616,622 persons, the number of employed workers in October has increased by 1.7 per cent. 34 out of the 52 industries show an increase in the number of workers employed. In general, however, the number of employed workers has declined by 10.8 per cent. in comparison with the month of October, 1923.—(I. F. T. U.)

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