

"YOU GOTTA GET DOWN TO—"

It has occurred to The Philosopher more than once, in listening to arguers about the social, industrial and economic problems of the time and in reading discussions of these problems, that "fundamental" is a sadly overused and misused word. One hot evening last summer he spent an hour strolling from point to point around City Hall Square here in Winnipeg, and listening to the arguers. "You gotta get down to fundamentals!" shouted one. "You gotta establish the economic fundamentals, and all these other things will settle themselves!" His idea was "the social appropriation of economic rent." He believed that to be the sure cure for all social, industrial and economic ills. "Nothing to it!" shouted another thinker, a Socialist. "That is a bourgeois remedy. The real economic fundamental is to abolish capitalism and production for profit and establish production for use!" Another urged as the fundamentally correct and necessary thing the organization of political activity. To which still another replied with a scornful question: "When did political activity ever win anything?" The method advocated by this scornful questioner of the only possible method of progress was a general strike. Others had other ideas of what was "fundamental". The word continues to be heavily overworked by zealots and fanatics, who fail to advance any idea that is essentially constructive. Surely nothing that is not essentially constructive can be fundamental.

MANITO-WABA AND THE SPIRIT OF PROGRESS

At the narrows between the upper and lower portions of Lake Winnipeg there is a rock cliff of peculiar formation. When the wind is blowing in a certain direction its vibrations in the cavities on the face of that cliff produce rather weird sounds, of which the Indians had a superstitious dread. To the aboriginal mind, with its primitive conceptions, those sounds were awe-inspiring, especially at night, or on a day of gloomy, threatening weather. In such conditions, they were careful not to go near that cliff with the weird voices. Indeed, they kept a respectful distance from it at all times. They called it Manito-Waba, which being translated from the Cree language into English, means "the words of the Great Spirit." From the name borne by that cliff long before the first white man came to this part of the world is derived the name Manitoba. The Indians regarded all the forces of Nature as manifestations of the personality and power of the Great Spirit. All races of mankind have done the same thing. In addition, primitive races have always attributed to certain animals certain powers, believing that they were potent for good or evil. It is not many generations since, in like manner, there was a belief in witchcraft even in the most civilized countries, and unfortunate old women were tortured and put to death because it was thought they were in league with supernatural powers of evil. Even at the present day the belief in "the evil eye" persists in certain countries. That is to say, a person with an unusual, sinister expression in the eye, is believed to have the power to lay a curse upon anybody at whom he glances fixedly. Psychologists tell us that this belief in "the evil eye" is like the primitive savage's belief that a swift, cruel animal such as the tiger, or the lynx, is inhabited by an evil spirit. Psychologists tell us further that this tendency survives in even the most civilized of us, but in a different way. Some fundamental tendency of our minds leads us to personify ideas, so that we speak of the Spirit of Unrest, for example, and to personify nations, as when we speak of John Bull or Uncle Sam. It is that same fundamental feeling which inspires such works of art as the shining bronze figure of the Spirit of Progress on top of the pinnacle of the dome of the new Capitol Building of Manitoba, holding aloft the torch of enlightenment in one hand and bearing a sheaf of wheat on its other arm.

WOMEN AS VOTERS

Mrs. Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, the sister of the late President Roosevelt, in an article entitled Women in Politics which she has written for the North American Review, says that what she herself feels that she most needs in order rightly to discharge her duty as a voter is "education in political methods." She adds: "I do not mean corrupt, but proper, intelligent political methods." But is not that precisely the thing which men need, too, in order rightly to discharge their duties as voters? Mrs. Robinson has simply stated one of the things fundamentally necessary to the right working of democracy. It is as true of Canada as it is true of the United States. Mrs. Robinson goes on to say that women want things more ardently than men want them, and she seems to be a little afraid that many women, when they find that the ideals which they hope to use their votes to realize are not as realizable as they are hoping them to be will be so deeply disappointed that they will begin to doubt whether suffrage has any very great real value at all. But thus to doubt is the greatest

... The ... Philosopher

of all possible sins against democracy. Surely it is not just to women to say of them that they are in any measure less steadfast, sincere and earnest in their duties in life than men. The past history of the human race has not warranted any such conclusion. The sense of responsibility in the mothers of the race is as sound and strong as it is in the fathers. Nor are women inferior to men in plain, practical common sense, for all that some of them may sometimes be thought to be by young and inexperienced men.

WHERE THE MARXIAN DOCTRINE GOES ASTRAY

The basic doctrine on which the whole structure of Marxian Socialism is built up is what Marx termed "the materialistic determinism of all history." That is to say, the belief that all human developments are shaped by considerations which can be expressed in money values. Marx was the great preacher of that doctrine. Lenin and Trotsky are the great high priests of it at the present time. The whole system of Bolshevist Communism is based upon it. It is strange that idealists should be carried to extremes of fanatical devotion to this materialistic conception of history formulated by Karl Marx more than half a century ago. Economic factors are, of course, powerful in their influence upon the thinking and action of human beings. But they are not the all-important factors. Do economic factors account for the feeling between Ulster and the rest of Ireland? The slogan of Socialism during the decades before the World War was, "Workers of the world, unite!" But the wage-earners of the different European countries, when the World War broke upon humanity, were governed by their nationalist feelings, not by the Socialistic doctrine. According to Marxian orthodoxy, they were misled by cunning capitalists, who made their profit out of the slaughter. There was World War profiteering, as all the world knows; but it is no less true that immense numbers of capitalists were ruined by the War. Those who were young were just as liable to be killed as the wage-earners were; many were killed. The Marxian doctrine is that a man's "herd", from the point of view of "herd-instinct", is his class, and that he will combine with those whose class-interest is the same as his. This is only very partially true in fact. Nationalism is an important factor; religion is another. There are capitalists who take advantage of these facts; but capitalists alone could not produce these facts. There are more things in human nature and in the world of actualities than are taken into account by the devout followers of Karl Marx.

THE ENDOWMENT OF MOTHERHOOD

There was a time when there was no such thing as the maintenance of public schools at the public expense. No thinking person now would say that such an expenditure of public money was not eminently right and proper and in the best interest of the public welfare. In other words, it is of supreme public importance that children be rightly educated to grow up to be good citizens and make the most of their lives. But the infant boy and infant girl has to grow up through a few years of babyhood before he, and she, can be sent to even the most elementary kind of school. The human infant, in those first years, craves material things, such as fresh air and sunshine and milk, and also an individual mother's attention. Infants that do not get their necessary share of these things are prone to give up the struggle of life altogether. The behavior of such unsatisfied infants is strikingly recorded in the vital statistics of every country in which there have been such infants, and in which there have been vital statistics systems. If a child is valuable to the community and to the country at the age when it begins to go to school, surely it is valuable earlier. If its education is important, is not its life important, and does not that importance begin at its birth, or rather, to speak more accurately, before its birth? Clear thinking in this regard, as in regard to all other matters which have to do with the essential values of human life, is advancing rapidly. The endowment of motherhood, to meet the needs of child and mother, is recognized now as being among the realizable ideals of practical politics.

NO FREEDOM UNDER SOCIALISM

In the course of the ages countless men, many of them men of great mental power and of unquestioned and unquestionable sincerity, earnestness and high nobility of purpose, have devoted themselves to the endeavor to find a panacea for human ills. Many of them have believed they had found such a panacea, and have worked with all their might to have it accepted and brought into use.

But their endeavors have always been without success. For all such cure-alls for the ills of the body politic are like the cure-alls which quack doctors used to sell in bottles. The nostrums which were advertised to cure all diseases were sometimes found to produce a modification in the symptoms in the persons dosed with them; but the drugs of which they were compounded disturbed other functions of the body, and new trouble, worse than the original ailment, often resulted. It is the same with political panaceas. Any good they could do to one or more sections of the community would be at the expense of other sections, and with an inevitable disorganization and general working of evil in the body politic. Socialism is a political panacea which is believed in by many earnest people. They see what they imagine to be the advantages it would bring to them; they do not give thought to the evils and disruption it would cause. Most of all do they forget that under Socialism no one would be free. Every individual life would be lived under state direction. The work which each person would have to do, the wages each person would get, the location of each person, would be decided by state officials. Each person would lead a supervised existence. Under socialism a man might gain something—it is not clear what, because theories often go sadly astray—but he would certainly lose much. Life is a game of gains and losses. The greatest loss any man can suffer is the loss of his freedom. There would be no freedom under socialism. Every attempt which has ever been made to form a socialist or communist community has failed for that reason, and because in other ways socialism violates human nature.

THE MOVIES AND THE MIND

It is getting to be a common thing to read and to hear said, that through the movies anything can be taught. But is it true? Undeniably the movies could be made of great educational value. There is in the United States an organization whose title is The National Committee for Better Films. It has issued recently "a partial list of film subjects on Health, Disease, Nursing and Allied Topics." The name of one of its films, which deals with the care of the teeth, is A Mouthful of Wisdom. Another concern, styling itself Sacred Films, Inc., announces that the first of its "religious films" is nearly completed, and that it will deal with the Creation and the Garden of Eden. Further, that "the work has been conducted by earnest and skilled directors, and will stand the acid test of the Church, not forgetting the entertainment value that is necessary." And in a Minneapolis newspaper a couple of weeks ago The Philosopher read that Rev. Roy L. Smith, of that city, "believes that the movies will be made an effective medium in presenting the spiritual message of the Church." He says that a moving picture apparatus will occupy as well defined a place in the equipment of modern churches as the piano, the hymnal and the heating plant. "Pictures are being used by churches in three distinct ways," he says. "First, as advertising to attract audiences for services of public worship; second, as entertainment; and third, as means of education." He questions their value in a service of worship. They may attract crowds, but intensely personal and religious work must be done to bind persons to the work of a church; otherwise they will disappear when their curiosity has been satisfied. The Philosopher is entirely willing, of course, to agree that the movies, as a means of imparting information, can awaken interest. But, as a means of education in any true sense of the word, they can do only half the work. Education can never be real without personal application and hard study. The powers of the mind, to grow, must be used. We may look at the moving pictures on "the silver screen" all day long, and by the time night comes know a great many more facts than we knew in the morning, but we shall not have acquired by that process of looking either personal skill or the power to think.

CAREFUL SIFTING IS NEEDED

There appears to be in the United States a widespread conviction that indiscriminate immigration should be stopped during the period of reconstruction, at any rate. Otherwise, there will be, during the coming years, an immense inflowing of population that will not be of a desirable character. Canada, too, faces the same situation, of course. This continent needs to safeguard its safety against any further accessions of ignorance, lawlessness and unrest. The chaos and confusion and misery that have been prevailing throughout the greater part of continental Europe and in "the Near East" hold vast possibilities of peril. From those countries would come, if the way were made easy, hundreds of thousands of people who would be easily worked upon by revolutionary propaganda. Only such immigrants should be admitted to Canada as are industrious, thrifty and determined to make new homes for their families on Canadian soil to become true Canadians. Careful sifting will have to be done by the immigration authorities, to make sure that we get no others.