

Capitalism and Counter-Revolution

A Series of Six Articles.

This series of articles by Walton Newbould are taken from a pamphlet published by the Workers' Socialist Federation, 400 Old Ford Road, London, E3. Price 3d. (Editor, "The Indicator.")

EXPLANATORY FOREWORD.

This pamphlet is largely a reprint of four articles which appeared in the "Workers' Dreadnought" in the Autumn of 1918, and which were written about six weeks prior to the German Revolution and the signing of the Armistice. Hence, a number of the references may appear to be out of date; others may make clearer the reasons for the failure of the Spartacus movement to bring off their counterpart of the November Revolution in Russia. The purpose of the compilation of the four articles, together with a lengthy addendum, as a pamphlet is to give permanence and further publicity to a Marxist examination of certain important issues of immediate and practical significance that have been given all too little attention by the revolutionary elements in this country.

London, June, 1919. J. T. W. N.

V.

THE State has once more come to be an instrument of despotism and an obvious means to the reinforcement of the existing social order. At the same time, parliamentary institutions are falling into disrepute and the machinery of democratic government is becoming more and more inadequate to perform its functions. The more that the central authority, whether local or national, comes to depend, not on taxation, but on the raising of loans, the less will be the interest as well as the capacity of the citizens to control its activities. Again, the support of the State by profits of nationally owned or administered businesses must also tend to render the Government free from interference. Taxation, in its historic forms, is ceasing to be the source of public revenue. A parliamentary system that loses control of the monetary resources of the State virtually abdicates any influence which it may have had. The governmental bureaucrats can also lessen enormously the strength of Parliament by jerry-mandering the constituencies and by precipitating elections at times untoward to an opposition. They can by various side winds withdraw more and more of the direction of local affairs from direct supervision, alleging as an excuse the need for efficiency or the difficulty of discussing in public the minutiae of administrative detail.

The more comprehensive become the activities of the State the more evident does it become that parliaments have very little power, and that they most assuredly cannot do more than exert temporary and ineffective checks upon the State.

At the same time, the tendencies of economic evolution cause mere local or national political forms to become inadequate to new requirements. Just as the municipal systems or "communes" of the cities of the Middle Ages lost all influence—and very rarely was a "commune" anything for Socialists to romance about—so are the eventually democratized national councils and representative bodies which took their place beginning to feel their impotence.

The citizen of today increasingly finds that if he is to protect or to improve his status he must resort to non-constitutional organizations. The capitalist class dictates to the Government through vast federations of

manufacturers or associations of commercial men who, either in their corporate capacity or as individuals, can exert pressure upon the "ruling class." They may do this either by embarrassing the State in its requirements of vital stores, in holding up supplies, in diverting materials, in engineering "public opinion," or they may achieve their end by subscribing to party funds, finding lucrative jobs for Cabinet Minister's children or placing enticing financial tips before the notice of aspiring politicians and bureaucrats.

These expressions of capitalists endeavor may prefer to have "nationalism" of certain industries so long as they feel sure that they can retain control over their direction, they may favor the establishment of "controllerships;" they may again choose to be satisfied with the imposition of embargoes or of tariffs. They will and do prefer to achieve their ends through the ingenious camouflage of "democratic" forms.

The capitalists have had their way prepared for them again and again by those reformers who have advocated the replacement of competitive private enterprise by state or municipal collectivism, by the amiable advocates of such projects as a League of Nations, Arbitration, Disarmament, etc. They are rapidly learning that it is not the form of their domination that matters so much as the content. They can see not how idealistic a super-national authority would be, but how eminently convenient. They realize more, with every day that passes, how world-wide are their interests. They not only traffic to the ends of earth but they own property and employ workers upon every Continent. Moreover, as time goes on, they discover that their ownership is itself interlocked with the ownership of other nationals in a thousand combinations of mutual interest.

In the development of this idea of a world authority the United States, of necessity, has played and is still destined to play an immensely important part. The American property owners at an early stage emancipated themselves from all the feudal restraints upon ownership which have clogged the laws and codes of Europe. They have lived in a civilization based on commodity production, on continuous and ever speeding exchange. No system of entails has taken root in their midst. Everything in America can be passed from person to person, from corporation to corporation. There are no taboos on trade. American institutions have been based not on a land but on a dollar civilization. In the United States the ultimate ratio is—Money.

Britain and Germany both grafted their capitalism on to a feudal trunk. They were empires in the old world sense. In them the ideas of a landed hierarchy continued to survive, and upon the canons of respectability and repute imposed by this order all who made money and won position tended to model themselves. Neither of these two Powers was qualified to carry the institution of government over to the extent of supernationalization. That was the destiny of a Power, capitalist in origin, growth, and expansion. The United States had the advantage, one might also say the indispensable ad-

vantage, of retaining its pioneer idealism, its democratic inspiration. People believed in the American Republic as the creation of a great democratic impulse, and they saw her as the fitting champion of a "World made safe for Democracy." What they did not see, in most cases, was that every expansion of democracy in the United States was accompanied by the protection of property rights and by the encouragement of capital."

The United States is, in fact, the grand climax of property civilization. There is seen, graven in polity and written in philosophy the very antithesis of Socialism.

Not only in institutions and in thought has the United States been the appropriate leader of capitalist world domination, but in her heritage of economic sovereignty. Just at the moment when she was able to take advantage of it the opportunity came to make herself not only financially independent but the creditor of mankind. Her great rivals, Britain and Germany, flew at each other's throat. This circumstance at once brought a wave of prosperity to her shores that checked the rising tide of labor unrest and of Socialism, halted Wilson's campaign against the "Trusts," and, finally, drew her peace-loving peoples into the maelstrom of Imperialism and War. She only entered the struggle when not only the cause of democracy but also the solvency of her debtors was hanging in the balance. She turned the scale, and whilst destroying German capitalism, bound Britain, France, and in a way Japan, to her by immense credits or by supply of that indispensable steel which her Oriental competitor so sorely lacks. The United States is today economic suzerain of the entire realm of capitalism.

Her priority does not merely depend upon the indebtedness of the Old World or the crying capital demands of South and Central America. It was their need which proved to be her opportunity, but now what her greatness reposes upon is, at once, her command of credit and her superior technique of production. Costliness of labor has, throughout her history, compelled the United States capitalists to seek out and to employ automatic machinery and economizing methods wherever practicable. Coming late into the field of capitalist enterprise her industries have been developed on a larger scale than here, and vast economies have been achieved as a result of profiting by other people's mistakes and failures. Quantity production, i.e., the turning out on a gigantic scale of great numbers of articles exactly alike, has become the characteristic of American capitalism, whether as affecting Ford cars or fabricated merchantment or what-not. Possessed of enormous capital, the controllers of American concerns can afford to lay out lavish plants, to scrap old establishments, to install the most up-to-date machines, and to effect every initial outlay making for ultimate economy and efficiency. Not only so, but more than this, millionaire foundations devoted to economic and sociological research and study are bringing to the aid of "big business" the best brains that money can buy or educational institutions equip.

Science is being applied to the elimination of friction not only in the material of production but in the personnel as well. Great attention is being given to the science of management and to psychology and physiology of the workers. "Welfare work" is being endowed and maintained on a huge plan in many an establishment. The crudeness of competitive capitalism has been passed, and with a refinement of camouflaged cunning the exploiter now keeps his workers in training and in health. It is not so much that the supply of these requisites of wealth creation is becoming attenuated and, therefore, needs conserving. It is rather that they are becoming conscious of their value and are displaying an untoward desire to secure a greater and greater share of the product of their toil.

(To Be Concluded)

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CONDUCTING OF STUDY CLASSES

Continued from Page Six)

chair or other objects should be used in preference to simply speaking of "commodities." The objects should be before the eyes of the students. This can be done by using objects in the room or pictures of objects drawn upon the blackboard or chart. In illustrating historical matters, the situation is somewhat different. If the historical occurrence is one which refers to Feudal times, for instance, the illustration must refer to the same period, but if it refers to an occurrence such as the falling of the small capitalist into the proletariat, it may be illustrated by reference to some recent occurrence. The closer the illustration can be brought to the student's own experience, the better.

There is no short road to a knowledge of Socialism. There are no iron-clad rules for conducting a class. The essential thing is to gather together to read and discuss, adopting system and method as you proceed according to special conditions and opportunities met with.

Some will be slow to learn; some will tend to become discouraged at the apparently slow progress; but the beginning is always difficult, and once the first stages are passed, the progress will be more rapid. All students must persevere and remember that one point thoroughly understood, even after much effort, is much better than many points which are but vaguely grasped.

Write Us!

If you find difficulties or encounter stumbling-blocks in your work, do not hesitate to send your questions to "The Proletarian." We do not guarantee to solve your troubles, but whatever experience we have gained in class work is at your disposal. Do not let the difficulties baffle you but get the work started and "carry on."

WORKING CLASS RUSSIA AND BRITAIN

The Co-operative Wholesale Society of Great Britain, has sent a foodship to Russia. N. T. Killon, chairman of the C. W. S., says the society is proud to send assistance to the Russian people. Once a beginning is made, it is hoped that a substantial system of trade between the Co-operators of the two countries will develop.