

The Study Class, Stage

By J. A. McDONALD.

HAVING already shown that neither Marx nor the Socialist Party of Canada ever stated or inferred that all social reforms were necessarily inimical to social progress, I will now try to elucidate the position of the revolutionist in the modern working class movement.

On this continent we have a population of approximately one hundred and thirty-five millions of people. These are divided up into several national groups which, to a certain extent, compete with each other. But, taken on the whole, we are confronted with the fact that regardless of national boundaries practically all of them obtain a living in the same manner. From the owners' standpoint, too, it can easily be shown that the house of Morgan, and similar concerns, are interested in the exploitation of Canadian and Mexican resources and workers just as much as those of the United States.

While no section of the world has witnessed such a rapid development of industry, commerce and finance during the past quarter of a century as this continent, yet it cannot be said with any degree of accuracy that the intellectual development of the masses has kept pace with the strides made in the field of production and exchange.

If we were to add up the total membership of those political and industrial organisations which claim adherence to the revolutionary faith we would have an aggregate of less than fifty thousand members. Even in arriving at this conclusion we would have to accept each group's estimate of its own numerical strength.

This showing is in all conscience weak enough even could we grant that all of these were Marxian students, possessing a fair working knowledge of social forces, and being imbued with a desire to accomplish a profound social change. Yet the facts of the case are that the great majority of even this limited number are merely discontented workers who feel the pressure of the system, but who cannot analyse or explain the cause of social conditions. Only a very small fraction of this total represents the element which has given serious consideration to working class problems.

So far as a revolutionary movement is concerned there is no such entity on this continent today. True, there is lots of life and activity and social progress, but even our philosophical acrobats, in all their versatile contortions, cannot conjure forth anything that could be termed a movement of the working class marching in the general direction of their own emancipation.

There are ample factors to account for the prevailing lethargy, but the enumeration of such would be outside the scope of this article. Enough, for the present, to realize that such is the case. In view of this situation, we can state without fear of successful contradiction, that the conscious endeavor to dispossess the ruling class and introduce a social form where production will be carried on for use is confined to those groups that are engaged in educational work.

There may be strikes and rebellions, and political elections resulting in apparent victory, but the revolutionary import of such mass outbreaks is not sufficient to stimulate any great enthusiasm until a proper concept of the struggle obtains. Back in 1911, the Social-Democrats of Germany registered more than four millions of votes in a national election, but there is now no necessity in consuming space to relate what happened when the world war broke out. In the presidential election of four years ago, here in the United States, more than a million voters staggered blindly to the support of the Socialist and Farmer-Labor parties, but in the present campaign even the leaders of these "revolutionary" groups are found in the petit bourgeois camp of Lafollette.

The strength of an organisation can be judged fairly well by the number of propagandists it possesses. If the party is strong and flourishing it is only because of the fact that it has a considerable number of members equipped with the necessary knowledge, and that these members are losing no opportunity of presenting their case. Stagnation and decay reflect a loss of those who previously carried on the revolutionary activities.

The extension of study classes is the crying need of today. We must provide the masses with the intellectual armor and weapons necessitated by the nature of the class struggle. In this respect no organisation on the continent has functioned better than the S. P. of C. in times past. I remember a few years ago here in 'Frisco there were four classes conducted simultaneously by as many organisations, and every one of the instructors were ex-members of the S. P. of C.

This does not imply that even this Party always took advantage of the opportunities offered. In my estimation too much stress was laid on economics at the expense of the class struggle. It has often appeared to me that teaching economics in Vancouver was a form of recreation. It was a more congenial hobby than gathering stamps or

raising pigeons. This estimate, if correct, would account for the fact that so many ex-members, after getting the rudiments of an economic education, drift into the role of Marxian Monks. They refrain from any participation in educational work.

A knowledge of the class struggle, and the materialist conception of history is just as essential to working class progress as to be able to grasp the fine points of the law of value, and the theory of surplus value. Lacking these fundamentals, we are likely to discover fairly well versed economists advocating an excursion into the broader field of labor politics.

As to the benefits accruing from such an education, frankly, I can see none. Labor parties, in other countries, have succeeded in routing their opponents and forming governments of their own political leanings but these have not been conducive to revolutionary progress. The various states of Australia have elected Labor Governments many times since the beginning of the present century. In those parties were also to be found individuals mouth-ing phrases from Marx and Engels. But what has been accomplished from a working class standpoint?

The same poverty and degradation is apparent there as here. A Labor Government passed a War Precaution Act in which free speech and free press were ruthlessly suppressed. Striking workers are shot down by labor troops when they dare to attempt a betterment of conditions. Unemployed masses are clubbed by labor police for the crime of holding protest meetings on the public streets. A Labor Premier asks for votes because his government presents "a safe, solid bulwark against revolution."

These are the results of experience and even the few who are able to quote Value, Price and Profit are swallowed up in the maelstrom of reaction. Nothing is gained but much can be lost. It is not a question of what the world may do to us so much as what we can do to the world that matters now. How can we obtain the best results from our efforts.

It is still my contention that we can do most by confining our labors to the educational field for the present. We can easily find means to secure the attention of sufficient workers to make our endeavors pay. We can present our philosophy in the serenity of the class room to far greater advantage than aimlessly wandering in wider fields. The present is ours to utilise, the future will take care of itself.

Interpreting the Marxian Position

BY C. LESTOR.

THE policy of the Party is now under discussion, and as an old-timer I feel very much interested in the matter. The articles by "C" do not ring true; they echo with the clap-trap of compromise. A party, like an individual, has its own particular psychology and the S. P. of C. has its own particular characteristics that distinguish it from other organisations. In the days of our youth we went forth seeking battle with everything and everybody that sanctioned the continuance of the present system. We hated reformers whole heartedly and mopped them up gleefully. They were so afraid of us that they bolted the doors and guarded them with the police to prevent us from getting in every time they held a meeting. What glorious days those were! And now "C" tells us we were wrong. He implies that our tactics and policy need revising. We call ourselves Marxists. Let me try to

give the Marxian position. I take the following from the Encyclopedia Britannica, as I think it fits the case exactly.

"The great work of Marx may be described as an exposition and criticism of Capital. But it is indirectly an exposition of Socialism, inasmuch as the historical evolution of Capital is governed by natural laws, the inevitable tendency of which is towards Socialism. It is the great aim of Marx to reveal the law of the economic movement of modern times. Now the economic movement of modern times is dominated by Capital. Explain, therefore, the natural history of Capital, the rise, consolidation, and decline of its supremacy as an evolutionary process, and you forecast the nature of that into which it is being transformed—Socialism.

"Hence the great task of the Marx school is not to preach a new economic and social gospel, not to provide ready-made schemes of social regeneration after the fashion of the early socialists, nor to counteract by alleviating measures the wretchedness of our present system, but to explain and promote the inevitable process of social

evolution, so that the domination of Capital may run its course and give place to the higher system that is to come."

The policy and tactics of the Party in the old days were in line with this interpretation of Marxism.

Does the Encyclopedia interpret Marx correctly? "C" says that we took in the old days an anti-reform attitude. This is correct but we never opposed those forces that were moving in the right direction. Reforms of a reactionary character, that is to say, reforms that we judged would retard the evolutionary process, we ruthlessly exposed as props of capitalism. The economic and political developments are bringing all radical parties nearer together, and some things present a different aspect to what they formerly did. The political tricks and wire-pulling of office seeking leaders in Labor Parties compelled us often in days gone by