

# PEN PUNCHES BY THE LOCALS

## News from Alberta

We are inclined to the belief that about the most important subject a Canadian Socialist Convention could discuss would be the amalgamation of the two branches of the Party.

The Edmonton Local of the S.P. of C. has shared the same fate as the Winnipeg and Ont. comrades in having their propaganda meetings broken up by soldiers. Two of the comrades—one of them a lady—were beaten with the "heroes' crutches, and others threatened. When Com. A. C. Johnson of the S.D.P. wrote a letter of protest against such mob rule, and sent it to the Edmonton Journal (Conservative) it was ignored. He also sent one to the Bulletin (Liberal) and received a courteous reply, saying it was not advisable to print it. The manager of the Bijou Theatre, in which the S.P. had been exercising their right of free speech, refused to rent it to them again for fear the soldiers would burn the building.

Edmonton Socialists and their friends held a picnic near 142nd Street, Sunday, July 15th. Races were run on the beautiful meadow where the smell of the new mown hay reminded us of "Maud Muller"; swings and refreshment booths were located in the shade of the poplars, and the mosquitoes were polite enough to not put in their appearance until the picknickers were leaving.

Comrade Laws, who is one of Alberta's progressive school teachers, accompanied by his wife, is spending the vacation in Edmonton.

Comrade Mrs. A. C. Johnson and daughter are spending their holidays at Banff.

Comrade Bergen of Ferintosh is doing some excellent work among the country locals, and the A.P.E.C. hope to be able to support him and one other organizer during the next few months.

Comrade T. J. Hughes of Asquith, Sask., who made a flying visit to Edmonton during the fair, reports the \$2-wheat farmers as a hard bunch to convert. But he never wearies in well doing and keeps handing them bits of literature that is to the point.

We wish every local in the Dominion, and especially in Alberta, would help the "Forward" by keeping their Ad. in the directory.

## WESTERN CROP OUTLOOK

Mr. H. B. Mortenson writes from

Amelia, Sask., giving a very poor outlook for the crops in that locality. No rain for seven weeks and everything gradually burning up. Finances very low.

It almost looks as though God were on the side of our enemies. In Flanders he intervenes with rain to prevent a crushing defeat of the Huns, and in the East the Russians are so disorganized that the Austro-Germans are just taking a walk over. It certainly looks bad for us so far as God is concerned.

## SECRETARIAL NOTES

Local No. 5, Guelph, have passed a resolution guaranteeing support for delegates to be sent to A.-C. convention in Port Arthur, and recommends the Dominion Secretary for the job.

R. Buhay of Montreal sends compliments to the Editor on the splendid character of the "Forward."

Comrade May Saunders of Edmonton writes, Congratulations—The Forward is still coming, and it is a fine presentation of Internationalism, even I.P. of C. men here have no fault to find with it, and it is doing much to unite the different factions.

After this we shall look forward to the re-organization of Edmonton Local. I am in receipt of \$13.55, being surplus in the treasury at the time Edmonton Local decided to die.

Local No. 4, Kitchener, has now 84 members on the books, and they are contemplating putting up a candidate in the forth-coming election.

## Notice to Locals.

We shall be pleased to hear from you with reference to the approaching elections. As your Executive are contemplating throwing all our resources into the campaign.

## INFORMATION WANTED

Will A. E. Medley, of Harris, Sask., please communicate with the Dominion Secretary, as we have lost track of him, and communications sent to Harris, and Saskatoon have been returned.

All Locals are advised to take advantage of the clubbing offer for Forwards. You can help us, and your Local at the same time. Get the Sub-card with your ordinary supplies and thus circulate the word. Provincial Secretaries are requested to stock Sub-cards for supply.

## HIGH COST OF LIVING DUE TO DEPRECIATION OF GOLD STANDARD

By T. D. Benson.

The currency question and its relation to prices is probably one of the most abstruse questions which can present itself for urgent solution. It is generally ignored when dealing with to-day's soaring prices, for it is too complex a subject for popular treatment nor can the present writer claim to see clearly all the involved issues of currency, credit and prices. There are certain elementary facts, however, which help to show that rising prices are not wholly due to profiteering, and that the Government, by its method of financing the war, must shoulder much of the responsibility.

Prices began rising in 1896, when the South African mines were being opened out and the cyanide process of extracting the ore cheapened the production of gold. A large quantity of gold at a cheaper cost of production was placed on the market and naturally exchanged for a less quantity of other commodities; the cost of production generally regulates the exchange value of commodities, whether they be gold, food, or clothing. Whilst the cheaper gold lessened its value, as Mr. Percy Wallis points out, the larger amount available increased the basis of credit which the banks could give, and the greater use of cheques instead of cash rendered gold as a currency still less necessary. This was the position in 1914 when the war commenced.

In 1914 the relation between the production of gold and other commodities, which till then had been fairly stable, was rudely shattered. The transfer of the workers into the army seriously diminished the production of commodities, and the printing press, instead of labor at the gold mines, supplied all and more than all the currency, in the form of Treasury notes, that was required. A cheaper currency always drives out the dearer, and gold vanished from the market. The inevitable result was a depreciation of the currency in relation to other commodities and a universal rise of prices. This increase is about 100 per cent. of pre-war prices, i.e., money is just about half its value.

Private profiteering, viewed from this standpoint, is not responsible for the rise of prices to anything like the extent with which it is credited. If, for instance, a person has made double the profit of previous years, reckoned in gold, he has made exactly the same profit reckoned, say, in wheat or other material that he did prior to the war. This applies to workers' wages as well as to profits, for everyone who has received a war bonus knows that he is not so well off as formerly. The evil here is that whilst the wage-earner is compelled each week to spend his income, the profiteers can hoard their inflated profits till after the war, when

the relation between commodities and currency again becomes normal, and so retain the profits gained by high prices to spend in a period of low prices.

The Government has appointed a Commission to inquire into profiteering, from which I anticipate no result. If it would appoint a Commission to inquire into its own financial conduct of the war and its own part in raising prices by the issue of paper money and by enormous credit borrowing from bankers instead of by bona-fide loans, some useful purpose might be served—if at least it acted on the report.

The only solution I see for the problem of the constant increase of prices is a strong effort to rehabilitate the currency, and that can only be done by the Government definitely realizing their responsibility for the evil that is being done. Failing the arrest of the depreciation of money by the Government, there can be no limit set to the rise of prices.—Labor Leader, 14, 6, '17.

With reference to the above, we desire to draw our readers' attention to a very important fact which may have some bearing upon the above, although we do not pretend to believe that it is the sole cause of the relative "High Cost of Living."

If, as Mr. Benson states, the depreciation of gold is the main cause of the enormously high prices, and we believe there is a good deal of truth in what he says—How can Government regulation of the currency prevent the rising prices?—in view of his previous statement, that the cheapening of gold has necessitated that a larger quantity of that important factor be exchanged for a relatively less quantity of other commodities.

Surely he is placing the onus on the wrong article when he suggests Governmental regulation of currency, unless he appends with it the regulation of all commodities. We venture to suggest that the time would be better spent in aiding the transformation from corporate ownership of commodities to Social ownership of the essentials of life—rather than dabbling with prices, which at the best are but the reflex of a given amount of socially necessary labor.

The regulation of currency cannot have any permanent beneficial effect upon the wages received by the worker—(in increased spending capacity)—which is the only thing that counts under the system. The trouble lies in surplus values; let these be conscripted for common utility.

If wages did not rise, or not sufficiently rise for the increased values of necessities, the price of labor would sink below the value of labor, and the laborers' standard of life would, therefore, deteriorate.—Karl Marx.

## Shiplacoff, in Montreal.

Dear Comrade Editor:

Our Local has quite a bit of news to report since our last communication. In view of the fact that there is going to be a general election, we (that is, all Socialists of Montreal), have decided to run a campaign. We had a general members' meeting two weeks ago, where this was adopted, and last Friday night, with the aid of Comrade Assemblyman Shiplacoff of New York, who was here in town, we managed to raise for a start \$250.00 amid much enthusiasm. It is terrible to think that in such a democratic country as Canada \$200 deposit is needed for any candidate.

Next Friday our candidate will be nominated, and the real hard work will begin. Of course, we don't expect wonders, but we mean to take advantage of our opportunities and break away a little of the thick leaden wall of reaction in this city. R. Buhay.

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