## WESTERN CLARION

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Official Organ of
THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

HISTORY BOONOMICS PHILOSOPHY

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VANCOUVER, B. C., OCTOBER 16, 1923

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## Reaction

IN TWO PARTS PART I.

HERE is a flourishing belief, apparently prevalent, that the Socialist Party is reactionary. By the S. P., is meant the party of revolutionary socialism, i.e., Marxian Socialism. This distinction, at the very outset, throws quite a little light on the matter for there is no other socialism in existence. It is the purpose of this writing to sift the basis of this belief and to test its accuracy.

To react is to "act back," i.e., to respond to the stimulus of an ancient condition. In the sense in which it is used by the different labor fraternities it means that the & P. is not aggressive enough in the, of these limitations constitutes its justification and forwarding of working class interests; not zealous or farsighted enough; in a word, "too slow." This meaning carries the further implication by contrast—that the real workers' parties, (et al) are in the vanguard of activity. With what result? That the progress of working class cohesion and its move ment to control its own life is impeded and the ed by the unprogressive S. P. which, wedded to the shibboleths of the past confuses and divides the workers in their struggle for supremacy. Which s to say, that the S. P.—unprogressive as it is said prevents the social aspirations of the whole his class. Poor fellows. Like Jesus, despited

the Carion the express the S. P. C .- carries a declaration of its principles, a summary of the tested confusions of historic materialism (and if it printed nothing else, it would be all sufficient, could we understand) and calls upon the workers to unite under the banner of the S. P .- i.e., to adopt the principles of historic materialism-in order to capture political power, which is the gateway to economic freedom. But the workers do not unite and do not adopt those principlesnay, don't bother even to read them. Why! Because they do not know what those principles imply and entail, and therefore they cannot unite for the promotion of an ideal they do not comprehend. This word "comprehend" bears no construction of censure or blame. We know well enough why the working class do not comprehend—the lack of opportunity of enquiry; the lack of data to compare; the capping stone of them all—the hypnotic suggestions and teachings of the ethic of dominion.

Consequently, and realizing this, the policy of the S. P., the methods, that is, by which it hopes to accomplish its ideal; is the policy of enlightening the working class to the understanding of its-social status; to break the hypnotic spell of the class-ethic; to awaken and stimulate working class consciousness, and through that, and because of that, to weld the dispossessed workers in the solid organization of a common cause, cohesive in fact, because cohesive in purpose. If the S. P. stopped here it would stop in the dreamland of idealist philosophy. It would be a non-revolutionary organization of romantic individualism. It would be no longer advocate of revolutionary socialism, but an exponent of revisionist inanities. In consequence, it would sink from the practical exposition of historic materialism into the labyrinthine circles of "practical politics."

But it does not stop here. Recognizing the import of historic materialism, i.e., the determining unca influence of material conditions, of the movements ciple of society, it brings its activities into harmony was with the unfolding conditions of material reality. It

analyses history, current and past. It seeks and explains the causes and conditions of change. It emphasises the fundamental relations of social forms that engender the concepts of the necessity of change; of necessity, which reflecting itself in the social mind and under the conscious direction of its ideation, urges society forward to new fields of endeavor. That has been its steady and consistent purpose; and if its activities have been limited to that it is due to the limitations of circumstances, not the feebleness of will. While the continued existence of these limitations constitutes its justification and necessity.

Consistently the S. P. has pursued its aim. It has not been excited by portents, nor lured with class emotions; nor deflected by the variants of the daily struggle for existence. It has neither denied the necessity for that struggle, nor fearfully kept out of it. But amidst that struggle the S. P. has pointed out the reason both for the struggle and the necessity, and used it as a further opportunity to promote the cause of the main issue-social control of the means of life. It has not squandered its energies fighting effects and side issues, like the schools of reform and revision. It has not been discouraged, like direct actionists, by the slow and lagard process of social perocition. It has not been stampeded, like the Communists, by the visionary of the new Russia. And in contra distinction to all such parties, it has preserved both its principles and morale intact, ready, not only for renewed effort, but,-with a keener insight into the nature of the problem-confident that in the struggles and cries of the critical future it is the only rallying centre for awakening class consciousness. The only rallying centre, we say deliberately, because it knows that only in the force of time conditioned social perception of the fountain cause of social miseries, will the great change, from property right to social ownership, be effected.

With the social changes wrought by the war; and the shattering of the last remnants of feudalism in Europe; and the forced confraternities of hard pressed dominion; a large proportion of society were in high feather for the great events of the glorious times at hand. But as that same society was thenand is yet-in dire ignorance of its social relations and the meaning of its social institutons; those expectatons flowed (as only they could) in the narrow channels of interested individualism. Of all society, misunderstanding labor was perhaps the most expectant. Naturally. It had nothing to lose and didn't know it. Consequently, as Byron says, "the brighter the hope, the deeper the disappointment," and just as consequently, misunderstanding the nature and meaning of social inter-relations and entirely, misinterpreting the activities (or rather their significance) of parties and leaders, it sought refuge from the political abasement of its political forms, in the virility of its own direct action, under it's own direct leaders. Disillusionment discounted politics and party. In them it saw but depravity and inepfitude. Taking-as society always does-the task nearest to hand, it attacked the manifested effect, uncaring, or unseeing the underlying political principle. And-again as is usual with society-it was hurried past the means and point of analysis. oblivious, therefore, that the mani-

fested effect which it saw was not the political principle of its social interest but only the hunch-back monstrosity of its misapplication. As society can never retrace its own way, it is swept far into scenes and events before the glowing sun of experience has fostered cansation into the ripe fruit of understanding. Yet, it was not only a natural feeling, but a true instinct which swung the actionists away from the shameless corruption and treachery of party politics. Not only true but a hopeful and encouraging omen. Not that "direct action" (as understood) is true, or is likely to succeed, but because it breathes the invincibility of man, unconquerable.

Hence it came that the virility of "action" blunted its edge on the misunderstanding of material condition. It is true, that much of this direct action understood its social status, was conscious of its slavery, and the economics of slavery. But that is not enough for minority movements. For, not as clearly comprehending the cross play of social ideation, not understanding the tremendous power of conservation and the inertia of custom, unmindful of the interwoven forces of interest and tradition, not differentiating between secondary economic aspirations and primary material purpose, this virility of direct action was dissipated in the angry back. wash of individualist tradition and idealism. In every country. Even amidst the most staggering poverty and unspeakable suffering. Hence it is that purely laborist or economic efforts failed to arouse society or consolidate the worker for the great task of social conservation. Failed in one case, because they are strugling against an ever rising tide of effeets, in the other, because they are grappling with forces whose effects they teel, but whose tangibility is not clearly visualized. Much in the same way as the I.W.W. used to regard the state. Not clearly analysing is nature and function they interpreted it as a shadow, negligible in the realm of production-until the shadow put forth its armored hand and crushed them. Now they know. In this failure the actionists indiscriminately include in sweeping condemnation the one party which has cought to guage and fathom those hidden forces, and by disclosing them to arm the working class with its only weapon of success-political understanding. We leave out of account the enthusiasm and imagery engendered by the Russian Revolution. An imagery which affected us all. The very fact that the event confused us is proof enough that the invisible forces of the material condition were not rightly guaged and fathomed. Yet there again is evidence of the soundness of Marxian socialism. For by the aid of that philosophy, the S. P., like a life boat in the tessing seas, rode tight, where the bulky freighters of "labor democracy," foundered. Not only that. It is the only organization with a philosophy, and the only one that can offer an adequate explanation of the why and wherefore of that tangled skein of confusion, the post-war relations and aspirations of the working class. But courage, comrades and actionists! The driving force of the material condition will yet focus us to one purpose, more cohesive because of the sifting of misunderstanding; more staunch because of the lessons of failure.

Certainly therefore, the S. P. is advocate of a

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