

THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT

Socialism, Internationalism, Votes for All.

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INDEPENDENT WORKING-CLASS EDUCATION.

By John Maclean, M.A.

THE revered trinity of the period of the French Revolution was Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: that has been supplanted by the modern variety, Agitation, Education, Organisation; or, at any rate, the latter trinity has temporarily thrust the former into the background. The worship of Agitation, Education, and Organisation is not confined to the unorthodox, for the war has compelled the governing capitalist class to become devotees as well as suffragists, pacifists, and socialists.

In the sphere of Agitation we have the War Aims Committee, the main effect of which is the staying up of capitalism against the rising flood of Revolution. Organisation is proceeding towards reconstruction at the close of the war, and this Organisation is taking the form of Industrial Councils as sketched in the Whitley Report, councils that mean to use the shop-stewards' movement to buttress up capitalism instead of letting it evolve into one of the agencies making for the rapidly approaching Social Revolution.

Fisher's Education Bill, together with schemes for the scientific training of apprentices and the technical improvement of journeymen, as well as the attention and money being devoted to pure and applied scientific research, indicate the new importance the capitalists are attaching to Education. The object in every instance is accelerated production of commodities, with the accompanying expansion of the surplus at the disposal of the plundering capitalists, so that these "gentlemen" may be able to live more comfortably than before, after disgorging sufficient to their Grand Committee, Parliament, to meet the annual expenses after the war. Neglectful of nothing that will induce the workers to walk quietly in the paths of capitalist righteousness, the capitalists now intend to use the Workers' Educational Association more than ever before to train wage-slaves on social subjects in such a spiritless and colourless fashion that they will become victims of quietism and confine themselves to "practical" problems that nowise endanger the continuance of capitalism. The Unrest Commissioners attribute the revolutionary ferment in South Wales to the teaching of Marxism and frankly suggest the W.E.A. as an antidote. Hence the interview Mr. McTavish, secretary of the W. E. A., has had with Georgius Rex. The kingly interview is the

conventional signal to the capitalists that the person honoured is safe, and that his organisation has to be supported.

I was seized and taken as a prisoner of war to Edinburgh Castle six days before I had to read a paper at a conference in Glasgow, February 12th, 1916, for the establishment of a Scottish Labour College on Marxian lines. The capitalists knew that resistance on the Clyde to new impositions was due to the same Marxian teaching that prevails in South Wales.

Now the W.E.A. is being galvanised into activity in Scotland. Lord Haldane helped at the opening of the branches in Edinburgh and Dundee. More significant still, Dr. Boyd of Glasgow University made a savage attack on Marxian education in Kilmarnock a fortnight ago when opening the Ayrshire branch of the W. E. A. He was safe in doing so there as no Marxian classes have yet been established in backward Ayrshire. His speech, and he is President of the Educational Institute of Scotland, reveals quite clearly the exact motive now underlying this new outburst of W.E.Aism.

However, the Government and Dr. Boyd are too late. Independent working class education in Economics, Industrial History, and kindred subjects has taken such a deep root that all opposition but deepens and widens the growth. Speaking for Scotland I can safely say there are between thirty and forty Marxian classes now in full blast, apart from the many study circles in various workshops and halls, in contrast with the four or five but two years ago. These classes are not small ones, for several have almost a hundred and others have over a hundred students enrolled. In spite of the many classes in Glasgow itself the one meeting on Sunday afternoon has nearly 500 enrolled already and it is growing rapidly every Sunday. From communications I have had from the Tyneside, Yorkshire, Lancashire, South Wales, and London the tale is the same: the growth of classes and the clamour for classes, the complaint being the lack of teachers. One significant feature is the growing number of women attending these classes, although the growth is not so quick as some of us would like. Here is an opening for the Workers' Dreadnought.

The lads in the trenches are by bitter experience having capitalist nonsense knocked out of their heads and will be eager for Marxian education.

Of that I am absolutely convinced. Our business is to prepare for demobilisation, and we have an excellent opportunity next year. In May, 1918, we have the chance of celebrating the centenary of Marx's birth. The occasion ought to be seized for a huge representative gathering. I should suggest that it ought to be held in Cardiff, Sheffield, or Glasgow. As Glasgow is stronger for Marxism than any other city in Britain, it seems to me desirable for it to be held in Glasgow. A powerful committee of the Marxian forces could be easily established out of the committees, teachers, and delegates from the classes, and a large initial sum of money could as easily be obtained from the past and present students.

Of Special Interest This Week!

THE SOLDIERS.

By E. SYLVIA FANKHURST.

"The Platform and the War."

All working class bodies and existing Marxian classes might be invited to send delegates. Amongst subjects for discussion might be provision of trade union and co-operative funds for the running of classes and payment of teachers, for the establishment of colleges in the largest industrial areas, and the publication and distribution of Marxian literature, translated from other languages or produced in the English language.

To aid in this work every assistance must be given to unofficial workshop committees and one must be established in every workshop in the country. Education is only one means towards the emancipation of the world's wage-slaves, but a very important one, indeed. Let readers get down to work, then, helping or starting classes everywhere and anywhere. What is wanted is a Big Push.

"THE DREADNOUGHT" IN PARLIAMENT.

NEWS FROM THE TRENCHES.

In an envelope on which is the official label of the Base Censor a soldier's letter has reached us dated September 30th, 1917, from "Somewhere in France." The writer says:—

"... We are getting fed like whippets, getting a tin of bully and a couple of biscuits for one day's ration. It is something hellish; we never get a drink of tea. The men out here are fed up with the whole b—y lot.

"About four weeks ago about 10,000 men had a big racket in Etaples, and they cleared the place from one end to the other, and when the General asked what was wrong, they said they wanted the war stopped. That was never in the papers.

"We are about 5 miles above Arras, and expect to remain for the winter and the winter following.... About a week ago the Germans made a raid on us, but we drove them back...."

WHO MADE THE WAR?

A CANADIAN officer in the London Regiment, writing to Lieut.-Col. J. Obed Smith, says:—

"I have, to begin with, the duties of Lewis Gun Officer and Work Officer to do at present, and when up the line I did Intelligence as well, therefore I am fully employed. The latter job gave me more to think about in connection with the war than anything I have yet undertaken. I had some nasty work, and I would like nothing better than to take the devils who are responsible for this hellish business and place them on the battlefield at night, alone with the dead; let them see what men are born for; let them see their friends with crushed heads and limbless bodies; make them lie in shell-holes, with half a body protruding in an upright position; let them gaze upon a body on a stretcher, with the bearers dead alongside; and if these sights do not make them repent them of their crimes then, well might we all cry: 'Who made the War?'"—From Canada.

'WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT' SEIZURE.

On Monday, October 29th, in the House of Commons the Government's attack on the "Dreadnought" was discussed. The following report appeared in *Hansard*:

Mr. Snowden (Lab.) asked the Home Secretary for what reason Inspector MacLean and other members of the police force visited the premises of the Blackfriars Press on October 24th and ordered that the type employed in the printing of a journal called *The Workers' Dreadnought* must be melted down and everything connected with the paper destroyed; whether the printer was asked to sign an undertaking not to print any further issues of *The Workers' Dreadnought*, and was told that unless this undertaking was given the whole of the machinery in the press would be dismantled there and then; whether the manager of the press was given an opportunity to consult his directors; whether he signed an undertaking; by what authority the police acted in this manner; and by what right and authority they demanded an undertaking not to print further issues of the newspaper?

Sir G. Cave: The police acted in pursuance of a warrant issued by the competent military authority under Defence of the Realm Regulation 51. Under that Regulation any type or plant used or capable of being used for the publication of the newspaper in question was liable to be seized and destroyed, but upon the manager causing the type to be melted down and voluntarily giving an undertaking not to print any further issues of the paper the plant was allowed to remain. No request was made by the manager to be allowed to consult his directors.

Mr. Snowden: Does the right hon. gentleman deny that part of the question which suggests that the reason why this undertaking was signed by the manager was owing to the threat that the whole of the plant would be broken up if that were not done?

Sir G. Cave: The whole of the plant used in printing this very objectionable number of the paper was liable to be seized. The manager requested that this might not be seized, and offered not to print the paper in future.

Mr. L. Smith (L.): Is it not the fact that by seizing the plant rather than prosecuting the paper the Government avoid the necessity of fighting the case

in open court, and is not this action of the Government due to the fact that the last case under the Defence of the Realm Act was lost?

Sir G. Cave: No, sir; not at all. If we do not seize the paper until after a prosecution it is too late, because the paper is published. Therefore, the right course is to seize the paper and to leave them the remedy if we have wrongly seized it.

Mr. Snowden: Is it not a fact that this paper is now being printed elsewhere, and the only effect, therefore, of the action of the police is to prevent this particular firm from having the job of printing the newspaper; and, further, is it not a fact that this National Labour Press in Manchester had a successful action against the military and police under circumstances of a precisely similar character?

Sir G. Cave: The paper may be printed elsewhere, but we seized this paper because of a particular offending article, and if the same particular offence is committed elsewhere the paper will be seized.

Mr. L. Smith: Was not the Government, by the Defence of the Realm Act, given power to prosecute papers, and why are they choosing a method which will avoid proceedings in open court?

As far as we are aware the authorities had not read the issue in question. We should like to know what the offence was, and whether Sir G. Cave has read the issue of October 6th, which he styles as "objectionable."

The "Dreadnought" is on sale through the usual channels. Customers who find any difficulty in getting it should write to the Manager, 400, Old Ford Road, E.3.

NAVAL AND MILITARY PENSIONS.

We welcome the statement made by Sir Arthur Griffith Boscawen at Shoreditch on October 27th, that in the case of soldiers (is this to include sailors?) army pay and ration allowance (is this to include separation allowance?) is to continue until the pension is fixed or, if a temporary pension is paid, it shall not be at the miserable rate of 14s. a week as hitherto, but on the highest pension scale, with allowances for children.