

The Y. M. C. A. and Socialism

With the development of Capitalism, and the consequent decline of the influence of the church upon "the masses," movements calculated to counteract this tendency and bring back into the church's folds those who had strayed away from it, began to spring up. The Young Men's Christian Association is such a movement. Founded in 1844 in the city of London, Eng., by George Williams, a clerk, it started out with the object: "To improve the spiritual condition of young men in the drapery and other trades." Seven years later the first Association in the United States was started in the city of Boston, Mass. The movement gradually extended, until to-day branches may be found in various countries of both hemispheres.

Amongst the Young Men's Christian Association's sympathizers, honorary membership, and principal financial contributors may be found kings, princes, counts, lords, philanthropists, politicians, etc., but its rank and file consists of wage workers.

The attitude of the Young Men's Christian Association towards Socialism, like that of the Church, is antagonistic which, considering the fact that it, like the Church, receives its main financial support from members of the Capitalist Class, is not surprising. Throughout the branches there seems to be a general avoidance of the subject; no Socialist newspapers are on file—lately, however, they have tolerated a little sheet called "The Christian Socialist" (!), published at Danville, Ill.;—and whatever the library contains on the subject is of an antagonistic or utopian character; such books as "Danger Ahead, Socialism", by Dr. Lyman D. Abbott; "The Strength and Weak-

ness of Socialism", by the Rev. Washington Gladden, besides books on profit-sharing and pure and simple trade unionism, are in prominence. On page 16 of a handbook of the history, organization and methods of work of the Association, these answers, among others, are given to the question: "Why this Work is Needed": (10) "As a bond between the employer and the employe, providing a resort maintained by their united efforts, where they may meet in social and religious intercourse"; (11) "To strengthen the young men of the nation to resist the great evils of the day, some of which threaten the foundations of our civil and religious institutions".

From the foregoing you will thus note that the Young Men's Christian Association opposes the Class Struggle and pursues the absurd idea of the get-together-policy between Capital and Labor.

In its infancy the activities of the Association were limited to those of a purely religious character and to this day its ultimate aim is the conversion of young men; but as time went on and the demoralizing effects of Capitalism upon young men increased, it became necessary to hold out to them inducements of a physical and mental character, like so many channels through which to reach them for their conversion and their subsequent return to the Church.

An annual report of the religious work of the North American Associations for 1903 gives about 18,000 pro-

*See Strong's "Our Country", especially on Immigration, Intemperance and Socialism.

cessed conversions, and makes this comment:

"While there has been an increase in the number of professed conversions, only 21.7 per cent of this number are reported to have united with churches; there is good ground for concern in this apparent discrepancy, it is explained partly by the migratory character of the young men who attend our theater meetings."

Now, conversions as a means of ascertaining the spread of religious sentiment are unreliable, as a large proportion of those who get converted do so simply for the more or less material benefit they may derive therefrom; others, failing to understand the cause of all this earthly unhappiness, including their own; settle down to what they consider the inevitable and, while leaving the Capitalist Class hold full sway, devote their attention to the spiritual world; besides, it seems that there are many conversions which do not convert, as is shown in the case of an ex-Salvation Army officer who told the writer that he had been "converted" sixteen times within one year in order to resist temptation. And as for those rejoining the Church, many of them are mere figureheads. Outside of occasionally attending services, they are inactive and are liable to drop out at any time. And thus the process goes on; whatever is gained at one end is lost at the other. Even periodical revivals, while accomplishing some momentary results, are unable to stem the evil tide of Capitalism.

While yearly results may fluctuate there is surely no ground, considering the large amount of time, money and energy expended by the association, to strike an optimistic attitude; in fact, the task of converting and leading men

back to the church must inevitably become harder, so long as the cause of apathy towards the church, (namely, the clergy lined up on the side of the Capitalist Class), remains. How can the church expect to get and retain the confidence of the masses, when she, by her actions, flies directly in the face of the teachings she proclaims and pretends to stand for? Is it just to uphold a social system which condemns its workers to a life of drudgery and wage slavery? Is it Christian-like to stand by the few at the expense of the many? While the church preaches that God hath chosen the poor, she deliberately chooses the rich; while she preaches that he who will not work neither shall he eat, she is continually fawning upon those who eat and perform no useful work in society; while she preaches that God is no respecter of persons, she seats her congregations according to their wealth; and the wine and milk of the pews so far from being without price are sold at a premium. The church has failed (and the Y. M. C. A. is recognizing the fact), to learn the lessons of history by paying too much attention to the spiritual, instead of the material needs of the masses. First create a healthy system of society; then man can be hale, physically, mentally and morally. Why then, I ask, not remove the cause of the evil instead of tampering with effects? Oh! but to remove the cause would mean the downfall of the capitalist class, members of which support and control the association. What else is it but the desire to perpetuate this system of capitalism, that causes this antagonistic attitude of the association towards Socialism; which lets every man believe what he likes about the future or a Supreme Being, so long as he does not force his views on, interferes with, or hampers the social or economic freedom

of others?

But, I hear you say: Granting the church to stand by the few exploiters as against the many exploited, is not the Y. M. C. A. doing a good thing by providing men with educational classes, gymnasiums, reading rooms, etc., at a small yearly cost, which otherwise would perhaps be inaccessible to them? No doubt young men need education, recreation, etc., but is it right that they, as members of the working class, the producers of all wealth and the majority of the people, should have to depend upon the wealthy for those things? I say no. Sops and palliatives will not stand; they may work for a while, but with the concentration of capital into the hands of less and less capitalists on the one hand and the spread of Socialist and Industrial Unionism teachings on the other, the masses are gradually awakening to an understanding of their right and soon must reach that point, where they, standing together as one man, will refuse to accept any longer favors and privileges at the hands of the capitalist class under the pretense of saving their souls, but will demand the unconditional surrender of that class, in order to gain access to their rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

With the Socialist Labor Party and the Industrial Workers of the World in the field there is hope for the working class; the brilliant glare of their beacon lights are warning it to steer clear from the rocks of false and so-called Socialist movements, both Christian and anti-Christian, and pointing out to it the only safe and sure road to the harbor of the Co-operative Commonwealth, where man, at last, shall be free from the bondage of wage slavery and be enabled to bring forth all the good that lies within him, physically, mentally and morally.

Wage Worker.

The Chicago Convention

I have read the proceedings of the Chicago Convention up to date. I believe that those proceedings will prove to be of great educational value. Nevertheless, I hold that there is a contradiction and an untruth in both the original Manifesto and the Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World.

Admitting with Comrade De Leon that "the political expression of Labor is but the shadow of the economic organization" yet the preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World ignores the fact that the shadow of a thing cannot be separated from the thing itself. There is no escape from the shadow that we cast.

Delegate Thomas J. Hagerty undertook, in his speech on the Manifesto, to emphasize the "purely" economic character of the new organization. In closing his address, however, he stated that when the workers "are united all the days in the year and every hour of every day, they will cast the proper shadows at the proper time." But, the fact is that the Industrial Workers of the World must and does cast some sort of a shadow all the time. The question will arise therefore: What kind of a shadow does it cast now? The fact is that the Convention, in stopping short of organizing for the political unification that it declared in favor of has left the Industrial Workers of the World in such a position to the lights as to cause it to cast two shadows. One of these shadows is the Socialist Labor Party, the other shadow is the "Socialist" party. The lights are not so far apart as to cause the two shadows to be entirely separated. They are near enough to each other to cause a portion of each shadow, directly near the object, to pass through or intermingle with the other. This logical conclusion cannot be escaped. Here we have three organizations, the Socialist Labor Party, the "Socialist" party, and the Industrial Workers of the World, whatever may or may not be their defects, all claiming to want the same thing—the Co-operative Commonwealth. Put that fact together with the fact that the delegates who controlled the Chicago Convention are well known members of the two political parties, and add to that the scientific fact that it is impossible to separate the shadow of a thing from the thing itself, and it ought to be clear to all that the Industrial Workers of the World is, in fact, affiliated with the two political parties.

The light that causes the shadow of the "Socialist" party is more or less affected with American Fakirization of Hellism. That is what separates it from the light that causes the shadow of the Socialist Labor Party. It is

hoped that the affected light will become clear and that the two lights will converge into one—that those members of the Industrial Workers of the World who are now affiliated with the "Socialist" party will leave that party and join the Socialist Labor Party—thus causing but one well defined shadow to be cast by the Industrial Workers of the World—the shadow of political unity.

I am not in favor, however, of waiting for this time to occur unless it happens speedily. I am more in favor that another convention of the Industrial Workers of the World be called and that the two political parties be invited to be represented with delegates for the purpose of establishing one organization that will embrace both the economic and political features of working-class organization. Such a procedure would not only bring about the political unification that both the Manifesto and the preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World advocate and that the Amsterdam Congress advocated, but the establishing of such an organization would concentrate the energy of the Working Class and render its work more effective. Through such an organization, the energy of the Working Class would not be needlessly sapped by its having to pay dues into the treasury of more than one organization, nor by having to support the press of more than one organization, nor by having to pay salaries to editors and secretaries of more than one organization. Some of the latter could be put into the field as speakers and organizers—thus opening up a better prospect for healthier growth.

The mission of the true Socialist is not to deviate from the correct path in order to aid capitalist development. That will take care of itself. The mission of the true Socialist is to strive at all times for the organization of the Working Class upon such lines as make for the Socialist Republic. In proportion as the Socialist is untrue to that mission, just in that proportion is there danger that the Capitalist Class will lead the Working Class into, essentially, another state of feudalism.

I don't agree with Comrade De Leon that the "might" or "physical force" behind the ballot must be the economic organization alone—"without affiliation with any political party." The real "might" or "physical force" behind the ballot must be the economic organization combined with the political organization. Political organization stands for more than voting. It also stands for fighting. The political party of Capitalism in power—it matters not whether it be the Republican or Democratic wing—is not only organized for

voting. It also commands the army, navy, militia, police, etc. The source of the fountain from whence flows capitalist tyranny is economic interests. The economic organizations of the Capitalist Class constitute the base of the fountain. But the fountain-head, from whence directly flow the tyranny and oppression, is the political power—the political organization. In the contest between the North and South, not only did the election of Lincoln come under the head of political organization, but the organization of the boys in blue and boys in gray also came under that head. In the case of the American Revolution both the British army and the army of Washington were organized under the head of political organization. I don't believe in fighting unless it is necessary. But I believe that the best way to make it unnecessary is to be fully prepared to fight.

Comrade De Leon takes the position that, in case "the will of the people as expressed at the ballot box" is thwarted by the Capitalist Class, then we must rely wholly upon our economic organization. But I take the position that, in such an event, we must rely not wholly upon the economic organization, but also upon the fighting feature of political organization.

Directly after speaking of the possibility of the Capitalist Class thwarting "the will of the people as expressed at the ballot box", Comrade De Leon goes on to say that "then there will be a condition of things by which the Working Class can absolutely cease production, and thereby starve out the Capitalist Class, and render their present economic means and all their preparations for war absolutely useless." I consider that argument a very weak one. The very fact that it will be possible for the Capitalist Class to "thwart the will of the people as expressed at the ballot box" goes to show that that class, together, of course, with its hangers on, will be organized to the best of its ability. It will not be "then" that the Capitalist Class will make "preparations for war." It will have already made "preparations for war" in advance. It will have watched the growth of industrial unionism and will have organized itself accordingly. It will have, if it considers it necessary, an armed military force in every industry in the country. Under such circumstances, if the Working Class does nothing more than "cease production" with a view of starving out the Capitalist Class, I very much fear that it will be the Working Class that will get starved out and not the Capitalist Class. The fact is that the armed force, or mayhap, the armed bluff, of the Capitalist Class will have to be met or

called by an armed force of the Working Class. It will then be up to the Capitalist Class to either fight or flee—to show whether it is a coward class or not. I hold, therefore, that the preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World, as it now stands, presents to the Working Class a false assumption. It assumes that it will be possible for the workers to "take and hold that which they produce by their labor, through an economic organization of the Working Class without any affiliation with any political party."

Neither the ballot nor the economic organization, nor both of them together, will be all-sufficient to emancipate the Working Class. But the balloting feature of political organization backed up by the fighting feature of political organization and both features of political organization assisted to the utmost by the economic feature of organization, will be needed to do the work. I believe, however, that the ballot, assisted by the economic organization, will go a long way before the fighting force of political organization will be needed.

The Capitalist Class may be a coward class, but it is no fool class. It may restrict the franchise in some of the States, but it well knows that an attempt to wholly disfranchise the Working Class would stir up a rebellious and revolutionary spirit. For this reason the ballot, although it is a "capitalist concession", as Delegate T. J. Hagerty said, yet it is practically in the nature of a forced concession. This fact places the ballot in altogether a different light from that in which Delegate T. J. Hagerty undertook to place it in during his speech on the Manifesto. Furthermore, although the Capitalist Class will, no doubt, have a large number of hangers on up to the time of its death, and also as mourners at its funeral, yet it knows very well that when it can no longer depend upon the Working Class as a whole to vote for capitalist-class interests, the time will have come when it can no longer depend upon the Working Class to fight for such interests. In other words, the Working Class will have reached a state of intelligence whereby an attempt to disfranchise it would be actually silly.

It has often been said that "he who is not intelligent enough to vote right is not intelligent enough to fight right." That implies that he who is intelligent to vote right is also intelligent enough to fight right. It by no means implies, however, that the economic feature of organization is unnecessary. The economic feature of organization can make itself very useful in assisting both features of political organization. It is also essential in the conducting of in-

dustrial in the wisest way, even as the economic organizations of the Capitalist Class are now conducive to that end in its interest. The economic organizations also enable both classes to see more clearly the situation of affairs. Accordingly the economic feature of organization constitutes a part of the "might" or "physical force" behind the ballot.

But more can be said in favor of the ballot. The house of Capital is divided against itself. The very nature of Capitalism is such that its development is bound to leave in its wake that subdivision of itself—the Middle Class, which, as a class, is always on the verge of bankruptcy. This Middle Class is, accordingly, bound to have its own economic and political aspirations. Some of these have manifested themselves in such movements as Greenbackism, Farmers' Alliances, Populism, Free Silver, Government Ownership of Railroads and Telegraphs, etc. The Capitalist Class proper depends upon the votes of its wage slaves to maintain its political and economic supremacy over the Middle Class.

But still more can be said in favor of the ballot. In the contest between North and South there was a geographical division which separated the slave-holding States from the so-called "free" States. For that reason, it was practically impossible for the slave-holding interests to keep out of the White House such men as Sumner, Douglass, Lincoln, et al. Accordingly, the battle was essentially fought on the floor of Congress before it was finally fought out upon the battlefield. When the Socialist Movement in America grows larger geographical divisions are bound to take shape which will favor the entrance to Congress and the various State assemblies and city councils of bona fide representatives of the revolutionary movement. The history of the Socialist Movement in Germany shows, from a purely capitalist standpoint, regardless of the feudal conditions that exist there, that the movement has developed most rapidly in the large industrial centers. For that reason the German government was practically placed upon two horns of a dilemma—either admit the entrance to the Reichstag of such men as Liebknecht, Bebel, et al., or show itself up more plainly in its true colors as the enemy of the Working Class, and thereby stir up the revolutionary spirit to a higher pitch. The German government wobbled about from one horn of the dilemma to the other, with the result that the Socialist Movement in Germany has made decided progress, notwithstanding the fact that it needs to be clarified in proportion as Capital-

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ism gains the ascendancy over feudalism, and maybe, sooner. The Capitalist Class of America is bound to be confronted by the same horns of the same identical dilemma, with the result, I have no doubt, that some of the political outposts of Capitalism will be captured by means of the ballot, and that some of the bona fide representatives of the Socialist Movement will gain entrance to Congress and the various State assemblies and city councils.

I will add to the foregoing that such political progress by means of the ballot will not want to be wasted or thrown away in the event of an attempt on the part of the Capitalist Class to "thwart the will of the people at the ballot box". On the contrary, such progress will need to be utilized in the organizing of the fighting feature of the political organization. There will then be a condition of things whereby any attempt to "monkey with the thermometer" will raise the temperature so high that no man or set of men will be able to prevent the American people from organizing for the purpose of fighting for their rights. The idea of simply ceasing production, and that alone, with a view of starving out the Capitalist Class—the idea of the "general strike" by economic organization

ALONE—will then appear as ridiculous in the eyes of the people as it now appears ridiculous in the eyes of Comrade De Leon and every true Socialist that "the Socialist Commonwealth will arise like a fairy out of the ballot box."

Delegate T. J. Hagerty said: "We are after the substance and will let the shadows take care of themselves." But he forgets that the substance will amount to nothing without true light, the true knowledge, behind it. The shadow that is cast is, accordingly, a test, a proof, of the correctness, or the incorrectness, of the stand taken by the Industrial Workers of the World.

Delegate T. J. Hagerty also is in error when he says that "Politics is quite a different thing, of course, from a political party". On the contrary, there can be no correct politics without correct political organization. Accordingly, correct politics and the political party that stands for correct politics are one and inseparable. "Some of the members of the Industrial Workers of the World may strive to belittle 'political party'". But, nevertheless, the Working Class will never succeed in emancipating itself from wage slavery without affiliation with a "political party".

GRANVILLE F. LOMBARD.

