Fluctuating Fortunes

Elsewhere in Canada in the two decade interval C. C. F. fortunes have ebbed and flowed with the economic tide, but nowhere else than in the agricultural province of Saskatchewan has this party managed to assume political office. It has governed the latter province since 1944. Of the six Eastern provinces, Ontario and to a lesser extent Nova Scotia are the only ones where the C. C. F. has been able to muster more than a corporal's guard of votes. In national elections it has fared even worse. In the present Federal parliament the C. C. F. is represented by only thirteen members and those were elected from only five of the ten provinces. All but two of these being western provinces, which latter accounted for eleven of the thirteen.

Seven of the ten provinces held provincial elections in the past twelve months and in all but one of these the C. C. F. suffered a decline in voting support. The one exception was Saskatchewan where the C.C.F. government was returned to office with an increased majority for its third term. But even national leader M. J. Coldwell admitted, as reported by the Canadian Press, that the Liberal Party rout was largely due to farmers' resentment over Federal government farm policies.

No better illustration of the shifting sand basis upon which the C. C. F. has built support can be offered than the Ontario Provincial election score of 1951, which cut that party's representation from twenty-one to two members, with a decrease of 138,618 in its popular vote, a proportionate drop of about eight per cent from the 1948 count.

The provincial party leader was quoted in the Toronto press at the time as attributing the poor showing of the party to "the lack of a central issue in the campaign." * Is there anything more revealing as to the non-socialist nature of the C. C. F. than the admission that it does not recognize socialism to be an issue? The C. C. F. campaign in British Columbia did not recognize socialism to be an issue either of course, but this did not prevent Mr. Harold Winch, after polling day from betraying his brazen duplicity by declaring, as reported by the Vancouver Sun of June 13, that "the C. C. F. was the only socialist party." This was from the leader of a party which strove desperately to assure the electorate in the midst of the campaign, that capital would not be hesitant to invest in a C. C. F. administered province. In fact, in the closing phase, the C. C. F. triumphantly announced that New York financiers had given assurance they were ready to help that party in achieving "public ownership" of the B. C. Electric, a power and transportation utility. (This supports a contention made previous to this admission and published in the May-June The Western Socialist).

The C. C. F. election pattern is the erratic course of a political party more concerned with vote-getting expediencies than principles. The so-called reform parties, representing the vague aspirations of politically uninformed workers & small capitalists, remain largely the prisoners of their following and, instead of shaper, they tend rather to be themselves shaped by the erroneous concepts they could not clarify. When the pressure of active unrest subsides a little they deflate like a collapsing balloon (if not fortunate enough to be already in office in such periods) to await the next rise in the political barometer. The alleged labor parties, especially the C. C. F., are well adapted constitutionally with their heterogeneous elements and hodge podge of conflicting subsidiary ideas, to adjust their propaganda to every new emphasis on grievances old and new, even conflicting ones.

* In the war-time Ontario provincial election campaign the C. C. F. in a paid advertisement in the Toronto Press described itself as "a semi-socialist party."

Evaporating "Socialism"

Hence we found the C. C. F. in the turbulent Thirties applying the seasoning of an occasional and misapplied socialist term to its non-socialist political brew. But in the less tempestuous political atmosphere of 1952 this device was so much in restraint by the C. C. F. that even reference to the pallid and politically innocuous Regina Manifesto was considered more conducive to respectable shivers than votes. And B. C. party leader Harold Winch who is adept at bandying the word "revolution" around for effect when working class militancy is in the ascendancy no longer finds that term convenient to obscure the shabbiness of C. C. F. "socialist" pretensions.

In reality the programs and propaganda of the C. C. F. and its prototypes elsewhere is conditioned by and reflects the needs of a changing capitalism. The now seldom discussed "ultimate goal" of the C. C. F. is in essence the bourgeois progressives' concept of a stable "capitalism," a parasitic refuge for weary top-rung capitalists and their more numerous petty "cockroach" brethren. To such "tired" capitalist elements this "ultimate goal" is a wishful dream of privilege with security and, they hope, minus the class struggle. State capitalism however, will not resolve the class struggle, but, as Engels predicted, "bring it to a head."

The socialist indictment of reformism has found unexpected but qualified and perhaps not fully recognized support, from a surprising source. In the April number of Canadian Forum, Dr. King, president of the Saskatchewan C. C. F. indulges in some political soul searching regarding the dilemma of the C. C. F. Though throughout the article the professor commits the usual error in referring to the C. C. F. as the Socialist Party, yet he gives some evidence of an awakening discernment of a distinction. In discussing foreign policies he finds little to distinguish C. C. F. views from those of the Liberay Party and other non-socialist organizations. It is in contemplating the home front that he makes the following observations:

> **"The trouble is that Socialists have wanted success, victory, power, forgetting that the main business of Socialist Parties is not to form governments but to change minds. When people begin to concentrate on success at the polls they become careful and cautious and when they become cautious the virtue goes out of them."**

He then goes on to say that on the main political problem of our time — "how to keep the world from being blown to hell" socialists should have something challenging to say.

We would suggest that the writer has something there and that if he follows out his own line of thought he will find himself out of the C.C.F. We would advise him that Socialists do have something important to say about war and it does involve a challenge, — the challenge to capitalism. The political problem of war can not be isolated from its cause. War is a result; a necessary function of capitalism, and was historically a means to its very development.

The companion parties of Socialism are dedicated to what Dr. King correctly defines as the main business of a socialist party — "the changing of minds" a change may we add — to a rejection of the capitalist influenced C. C. F. outlook — and to a development of the all powerful weapon of class consciousness that will finally banish capitalism and war forever from the earth.

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