

The Class Struggle

By JOSEPH PUSATERI

WE are told that there is a class struggle between those who own the means of production and those who do not. However, present day events prove that though this struggle exists to a certain extent it is only one of a score of bitter struggles now raging along the economic front.

Mr. Stuart Chase recently gave an excellent analysis and review of the many economic, political and social struggles that exist today. (We will overlook for the moment other things he has said.) He observed that in the United States today we have struggles between rival industries—railroads versus highway trucks; oil versus coal; struggles between banks and manufacturers for control of plants; between Wall Street financiers and the farmers of the West and South whose mortgages Wall Street holds; between New England textile mills and Southern textile mills; between chain stores, cooperative stores and independent stores; between city and country; between importers and domestic manufacturers; between whites and negroes; between the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. There are struggles and struggles.

The idea of the class struggle was of the essence of Karl Marx's theory. In 1850 or thereabouts, he observed in Western Europe a real struggle between wage earners and factory owners. Perhaps, of the many struggles between various groups at that time, it was the most important. But Marx froze the notion into an Absolute. Borrowing heavily from Hegel's dialectical materialism, he extrapolated the class struggle and made it apply to past, present and future. However, it was not an Absolute then and is not one today. The Class Struggle as an absolute law is meaningless. Followers of Marx (and other users of the phrase who deny Marx) overlook many facts. The place and date of Marx's observations are disregarded. All other economic struggles are ignored, or inconvenient facts are forced into line in order not to disturb the hypothesis. What Marx would have thought of the Class Struggle theory as codified and distorted by his disciples will never be known.

But it may be argued that while the term is without tangible validity, it provides a useful psychological stimulus to labor organization. It furnishes a feeling of solidarity and fighting morale. This is the old argument in defense of any means to achieve a given end. Waiving moral aspects altogether, it seems that the Class Struggle, by giving an incorrect picture of the world as it is, hinders the strategy of those who want to improve economic conditions. A general who disposes his troops on the basis of an inaccurate map is not likely to win many battles. The class struggle map is probably a major reason why the socialist movement has made so little progress in America. It is known to Georgeists that where there is not correct thought, there cannot be correct action.

When the class struggle becomes an article of faith the Worker is canonized and Labor can do no wrong. A strike is a holy crusade. In New York recently a strike was called in a group of cooperative restaurants. Many members of the organization were defenders of Labor as well as of the Cooperative Commonwealth. Should they support the Worker or the Cooperative Ideal? The strike put them in a terrible predicament. A functioning, useful organization was torn in two and all but wrecked by this battle of Absolutes.

When the Absolutes are laid aside, and the labor unions themselves are examined, the ghosts depart, and reformers begin to realize that some unions are initiated by crooks, that some are organized for purely commercial purposes, and that some are functionless. Recent criminal convictions against union officials prove that the worker has to struggle against his own leader, amongst other things. To prostrate oneself before the abstraction of Labor is of no help to working men and women. Workers will struggle, according to the class strugglers, to obtain what is rightfully theirs—and will do so because they have nothing to lose but their chains. But the workers are controlled by union officials. Now they have more chains to lose! The struggle changes from the worker versus the capitalist, to the union official versus the worker.

The line of least resistance is to be met, if unions are to maintain their status. It is much more convenient for them to obtain higher wages by any means at all. If the capitalist should add the wage rise to the product, that is not objectionable to the union official. Recently, clothing workers obtained an \$18,000,000 pay rise. Suits now cost from \$2.00 to \$5.00 more because of it. Who pays for this rise in wages? The consumer pays it to the members of that union. The union official, the workers, and the capitalist have settled their dispute. But the "class struggle" here was undoubtedly that of the union workers against the rest of the community, the consumers. Laborer against laborer.

Why, in spite of continuous "increases" in wages, is the worker always kept at a bare subsistence level? Why, in spite of the "successes" of Unionism, Cooperatives, Social Credit, Pensions, Social Security, etc., does poverty persist? And even where capitalism is "abolished" by Socialists and Communists, why do they struggle and wallow in the mire of poverty in spite of their victory over "capitalism"? Why do the workers lose even when they win?

Undoubtedly, they have been misinformed and misled. Those who have learned of the fallacies in the wage-fund theory; those who understand the economic law of rent; those who know the difference between voluntary and compulsory cooperation, and understand human nature—only they can work their way through this maze of confusion and offer a solution.