

JOTTINGS FROM VANCOUVER MEETING

For a year or so now Vancouver Local has held propaganda meetings each Sunday without a single intermission, the organization being chiefly concerned in the conducting and improvement of these. Outside of this work the agitation has been more or less of an individual nature and though collective effort could have done more there is little fault to find on that score, steps are being taken to remedy this to some extent. Considering the general conditions in this city and the make-up of its population the results (though, of course, never really satisfactory to a Socialist) have been about as favorable as could be expected. With a business element disproportionately large and an immense horde of hangers on, together with a proletariat a large portion of whom expect to escape wage slavery by the real-estate route, the task of a Socialist Local is no light one. Amid these surroundings there is little cause for wonder at the character of the crowds that frequent the propaganda meetings. Some are there simply out of curiosity, coming and going just as they please, careless as to interrupting others present; also a few who drop in to avoid the inclemency of the weather. Some find the meeting a convenient place to seek endorsement for some pet theory or to expound a line of action directly contrary to that laid down in the platform of the S. P. of C. It is well, however, to state that a goodly portion attend for the purpose of inquiry, to inform themselves as to the aim and object of the continued propaganda.

On Sunday, April 10th, Comrade E. T. Kingsley was the speaker. It is quite proper to assume that to many present the address had a familiar ring, but of a subject that will bear and need constant repetition before the mass of wage-workers become conscious of their position as slaves of capital, and the revolutionary spirit is stirred within them.

The vast bulk of the modern industrial corporations was dealt with and its growth by the absorption of the smaller enterprises. How as a part of its expansion the various trades had disintegrated or become more and more dependent and insecure, displaced by the rise of enormous armies of laborers with but slight skill. Under these circumstances the futility of the strike and boycott to bring relief was emphasized, the speaker stating that labor thus acting was always whipped, because in the end they were still slaves, the appendages of capitalist property, and the employing class still masters. Should a rise of wages be secured by one section its benefit was at the expense of the balance, and though some particular concern might be inconvenienced, the capitalist class was not adversely affected thereby. For a rise of wages to apply to the workers as a class it could easily be seen that their relative position would be exactly as it was previous to such gain. A fight of this kind is no part of the great class struggle, that which gives rise to the political movement of Labor. It is in reality a fight among the workers themselves over a condition of the labor market. Labor-power which the workers have to sell is a commodity, and, like others, exchanges at its value according to brand, on the basis of its cost of production. Labor-power being contained in the person of every worker, its cost is the cost of living. In a fight to raise the price of this (termed wages) or against a cut, the settlement will be arranged in accordance with the universal laws that govern all commodities. Should the market be overstocked the cut will stand, if otherwise it will not, or a rise may take place but the chronic condition at the best of times, with a labor market well supplied, gives slight hope of any real rise taking place. To continue the fight on the industrial field for economic power was foredoomed to defeat.

Comrade Kingsley likened the industrial field to a plain dominated at every point by guns; these represent the political power—the government or the state. Whoever held the guns controlled the plain, representing economic power. To gain this power meant the capture of the guns. That was the situation. This is the class struggle and its battle ground is on the political field, and there all the efforts of the working class should be directed. In this country the workers possessed the franchise and at the polls could outvote the master class. They would not do this all at once, but gradually, step by step, as an increasing number came to understand their class interests, putting their representatives in the halls of legislation until a majority brought the control.

The above aims to give some hints as to the scope of the address. Many questions were put and replied to satisfactorily or otherwise according to the point of view of an audience containing a fair percentage of captious critics, those who jump to conclusions, just ordinary listeners and lastly and not the least, let us hope, those who were there to analyse and think it over.

RAYNER.