

THE COMING CRISIS.

By J. R. CAMPBELL.

The prophecy that Capitalism was gradually drifting towards financial disaster has been made so often during the past few years that the average man is beginning to doubt the sanity of the prophets. To the worker who takes a superficial view of things, Capitalism appears to be as firmly rooted as ever before, and the prophets are dismissed as crazy individuals who are looking at the existing situation through the spectacles of their own desires.

Nevertheless every revolutionary has imposed upon him the bounden duty of investigating the present tendencies of Capitalism, and endeavouring us far as possible to estimate their force and direction. And a survey of the existing situation will speedily convince us that while the financial crash has not yet come it is drawing appreciably nearer. Every week that passes finds the state of national finances getting worse, and a fall in the value of money expressing itself in increased prices of all the necessities of life. The financial experts of Capitalism are grappling fiercely with the problem, without meeting with an appreciable measure of success. Two things are required to ease the situation if they could only be brought about. The first is that the workers shall be induced to increase production for their kind masters, so that there shall be on hand a greater amount of wealth, which can be taxed to ease the burden of the war debt. This is almost impossible of attainment. Even the most pressured of Dubbs has begun to see through that stunt. The other remedy for reducing the financial instability is the drastic cutting down of expenditure. This, too, is likewise impossible.

The brutalities of British Imperialism have aroused to national consciousness the subject peoples of the British Empire. More and more troops are required in Ireland, Egypt, and India to hold the Empire together by brute force. Every month that passes, the demands of the military machine for men and money becomes more onerous. Any money that is saved by the cutting down of expenditure for civilian purposes is immediately eaten up by the insatiable demands of the military machine. And the Capitalist system, denied the application of the remedies that could ease the situation, reels towards its end.

The outward and visible sign of that approaching end is the constantly increasing price of all

the necessities of life, a factor that will force even the constitutional British working class to adopt drastic action to maintain even their present wretched standard of existence, and in the fight that is looming up they will discover that there is no solution short of taking their industrial and social destiny into their own hands, and establishing a system of production for use and not for profit.

We are rapidly approaching the greatest period of social struggle in the history of Great Britain, and the less time we of the left wing waste in discussing our theoretical differences and the more hard work we throw into the immediate task of consolidating the workers industrially and socially the sooner we will attain victory.

The danger that confronts us is not that the workers will acquiesce in tamely bearing the growing burdens that are being imposed on them, but that when they do revolt they will revolt in sections and be easily crushed by the superior power of the Capitalist state. That this danger is real no one will gainsay at a time when all sections are putting forward demands for increases, and are preparing to fight an almost hopeless battle on the old sectional lines. The duty of Socialists is plain at this juncture. It is to work unceasingly in the trade union and in the workshop to get concerted action amongst all sections of workers. Our class are moving out to give battle to the Capitalist class. They are moving out in sections under a leadership that is anything but courageous.

The task falls to us of trying to get a united policy amongst the various sections, and developing a strong unofficial movement to spur on the timid leaders, and eventually to displace them when the struggle grows fierce and they are about to sound a retreat.

The situation demands an increased amount of attention to workshop organisation. Some desultory criticism of the workshop position has recently found expression, but it is devoid of an alternative policy, and gives no inkling of what to do in present circumstances. It is always easy for anyone who stands above the industrial battle of the working class to criticise a policy of action in the light of an ideal that takes no account of time or circumstance. But we are in need of action not in the distant future when an ideally educated working class has been developed, but at the present moment when we are entering into

a period of decisive struggle. The workshop movement has always thrived in such periods, but the need for it was never so great as it is at the present time. It is the only movement that can bring the different trades in an industry together for common action against the bosses, and bring the scattered industries together into a powerful mass movement. In every country in the world where the workers are beginning to struggle for power the Workers' Council, composed of delegates from the different workshops in the districts linked up nationally, is the organisation through which the workers can most easily make their power felt. It was the Workers' Councils hastily revived that saved Germany from the militarist reaction, and may carry it forward to a proletarian dictatorship. It is the Workers' Councils that are being developed in Italy as the proletarian weapon for the coming revolutionary struggle. It is the development of such councils that the Third International lays the greatest stress upon. Yet we find in Britain the curious spectacle of Socialists who admit the limitations of Parliamentarianism, or who even deny its utility altogether, and who as an alternative policy accept that of the Workers' Committees theoretically, CONTINUING TO WITHHOLD THEIR SUPPORT FROM THE COMMITTEES IN PRACTICE. They have accepted the new theory while still adhering to the old practice.

The development of the struggle will also emphasise the need for social organisation. The rank and file conference in London has endorsed the policy of social committees which the Scottish Workers' Committees are endeavouring to popularise throughout Scotland. These committees are not merely administrative bodies to be set up in the sweet by-and-by on the morrow of the Revolution. They are fighting bodies who have a definite function to perform in arranging the food supply, taking inventories, permeating the co-operative, and organising the means of working class defence. They and the industrial committees will be successful only in proportion that Socialists forget their party differences and respond to the needs of the class. The workers are lining up for battle, and the responsibility of guiding their struggles in a revolutionary direction rests on the shoulders of all active Socialists.