

RAPID GROWTH OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Arthur Beach Speaks on Aims and Objects of the Movement to People's Forum.

"Social democracy has sprung up in every country where there is any industrial development to speak of. It is a new movement, being less than 50 years old, and it has had an extremely rapid growth, more rapid, in fact, than any other movement of modern times. It is still growing, and although it is receiving considerable criticism at the present time it will continue to grow because it is the political expression of the needs of the working class."

With the foregoing statement, Arthur Beach began a lecture at the People's Forum yesterday afternoon, on the Social Democratic movement. He dealt with the subject from an economic point of view, analyzing the status of the wage-earner in capitalist society. There was no hope, he declared, of substantial improvement of working class conditions short of re-modeling the entire structure of industrialism.

On Short Notice.

Mr. Beach was required to give his lecture on extremely short notice. Up till Wednesday last, it was expected that Herman Saltzman, who was the running mate of Mr. Beach in the constituency of North Winnipeg at the last provincial election, would take the platform. He had to leave the city, and Mr. Beach was asked to take his place.

As chairman of the meeting, J. S. Woodsworth introduced the speaker, and remarked that any movement which had polled as many votes as the Social Democratic movement polled in the last election deserved a most respectful hearing. Mr. Beach stated that social democracy did not arise out of the opinions of any man or group of men; it sprang from the conditions of capitalism. It appeared as the economic and political expression of the working class. Its object was nothing short of the abolition of the present system, because that system produced unemployment and poverty inevitably. Any examination of unemployment which was so superficial as to propose nothing better than labor exchanges and relief works as remedies was worthless. To understand unemployment, it was necessary to analyse the character of wage-labor and study the development of capitalism.

Wages Kept Down.

Continuing, the speaker declared that wage-earners were compelled to surrender a part of their product to capitalists because competition on the labor market kept their wages down to the minimum of subsistence. This surplus the capitalists used to further the development of new territories, and thus capitalism served a useful purpose. It ought not to be forgotten, however, that the expansion was effected at the expense of the worker. The capital employed in development was first wrested from him in the shape of surplus value. The need of change arose out of the fact that despite the rapid development of new areas, labor markets tended to become glutted, and as far as he could see poverty was going to grow indefinitely. Conditions in Winnipeg, for instance, were worse in the last few years than they had been a decade ago. He was pessimistic about the capitalistic system, and did not think it capable of substantial improvement. There might be a period of active production after the war, but it would not last long and the markets would soon become stocked with surplus goods.

Revolutionary Changes Necessary.

Social democracy proposed that society as a whole should repossess itself of the earth and the means of production. It was true that the movement proposed numerous reform measures, but most Social Democrats were agreed that nothing permanently beneficial was to be expected from reforms. Revolutionary changes alone would suffice.

There was an active discussion after the meeting and the afternoon was enriched by music from a number of Russian singers. They also played on a Russian instrument called the "Balalaika." The sweet folk songs brought much applause.