

On the Struggle for Free, Universal Health Care

By Antonio Artuso—Montreal, Canada

Introduction

The struggle for a health care system is part of the class struggle throughout the world, of the working class and people in general against the for-profit capitalist health-care system. It is the struggle between emerging socialism against capitalism, of the 99% of the people against the 1% of the capitalist-imperialist class (big shareholders, multi-millionaires and the financial institutions).

The present Canadian health care system is the result of a fierce battle between the Canadian workers and people in general against the private health care system.

The struggle for free, universal health care started during the Great Depression of the 1930s. In Canada, the first person who fought for such a system was Dr. Norman Bethune. During the depression, as a physician in Montreal, Bethune became increasingly concerned with the socio-economic aspects of disease. He gave the poor free medical care. He challenged his professional colleagues and agitated, without success, for the government to make radical reforms in medical and health-care services in Canada. Bethune formed the Montreal Group for the Security of People's Health.

The Soviet Union's health care system A model of socialist medicine

In 1935, Norman Bethune travelled to the Soviet Union to observe firsthand their system of universal free health care. During this year he became a committed Communist and joined the Communist Party of Canada. After his visit to the Soviet Union, he explained that he had seen a country where all citizens received treatments, contrarily to capitalist countries where, from the same disease, a worker or peasant could die, while a wealthy person could be cured.

In 1936, with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Bethune interrupted his campaign for a free, universal health care system in Canada and went to Spain to serve with the International Brigades against the fascist forces of Franco, Mussolini and Hitler. After the fall of Madrid, Bethune went to China in support of the Communist Party of China's (CPC) Eighth Route Army during the Second



Theodore A. Harris, *Healthcare*, paper collage, 1999

Sino-Japanese War, where he died after contracting septicemia by cutting himself in an operation.

The struggle for universal health care in Canada in the 1950's and 60's

Soon after World War 2, the struggle continued with very important battles. In 1947 and in 1950, two parties, the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, which became the New Democratic Party) and the Social Credit party, implemented the first public hospital system in Saskatchewan and in Alberta. And in 1957, at the federal level, the first national public health-care system was implemented – the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act (HIDS). It was adopted by all provinces by 1961.

The fierce opposition of the capitalist establishment to universal public health care

The fight for a broad publicly funded system began at the provincial level, and was originally led by Saskatchewan Premier Tommy Douglas and the CCF, who won the 1960 Saskatchewan general election on a campaign promise of publicly funded health care, over the op-

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position of the medical profession. The struggle to implementing Medicare continued under Lloyd, who succeeded Douglas.

Lloyd overcame considerable public opposition to the plan, including a strike by the province's doctors, who withdrew their services from the public in opposition to the proposed Medicare plan. The resolution of the dispute was assisted by mediation by a British Labour peer, Lord Stephen Taylor, who had been involved in the development of the National Health Service in Britain.

The Canadian health care system was very good, but now it is threatened with privatization.

The Canadian health care system is the envy of many countries. One can undergo, without any medical insurance plan and without paying a dollar, costly and repeated operations, such as heart or brain surgery. In many other countries, particularly in the U.S., one could lose all one's savings and be indebted for many decades by having to pay for the medical costs. Only the state has the strength to assume such costs. And it has the absolute responsibility to assume them, and to take care of all its people.

The Canadian health system has had, from its creation until now, three important characteristics: it is (1) free (2) publicly funded (paid by the state) and (3) universal (for Canadian citizens, permanent residents and certain temporary residents). It is provided by 13 provincial and territorial health insurance plans.

The Canadian system is not perfect and many struggles must be waged by the working class and people in general to force the government to assume many other important costs such as (1) free dental care, (2) free medicine (which is provided for people with low income) and other costs.

But the class struggle is very fierce, and the Canadian people are facing a looming menace: the privatization of the system of health care, education and other public services.

The threat of privatization of medicine in Canada – a fierce struggle between public, universal health care and private health care

The neoliberal reforms by the capitalist-imperialist class are destroying the health-care system in Canada and in many other countries. The reason for that is that the capitalist class does not want the state to control the medical, educational and public services. They want private hospitals, schools and universities, private public services to bring billions of dollars to the capitalist owners of these institutions. Under socialism, all the service would be given

for free to the working class and people in general. The capitalists make billions of dollars in profits for the only reason that they own the means of production (land, industries, means of transportation, etc.). They don't deserve the profits because it is the working class that produces everything. The capitalists, in fact, constitute a parasitic class that will disappear under socialism, in a planned economy of, by and for the working class.

The struggle for a free, universal and public health care system in the U.S.

During his campaign for the presidency, Bernie Sanders said that "18,000 U.S. citizens die every year because they don't have access to a doctor when they need that doctor". He compared the health care systems of many European, Scandinavian countries and Canada, with that of the U.S., and supported the free, universal and public health-care system as a fundamental human right.

Amy Goodman, of Democracy Now, explained: "The U.S. health care system once again ranks dead last among wealthy countries. That's according to a new report by the Commonwealth Fund. Researchers found that U.S. spends far more per capita than ten other nations, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Holland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, yet it has the lowest life expectancy and the highest infant and maternal mortality rates, and the most glaring inequities. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) of the Congressional progressive caucus responded that the cruel, for profit health-care system is broken. It is time to guarantee health care as a human right. It is time for Medicare for all."

What is to be done? – For a People's Front for the defence of Free, Universal Health Care

The COVID-19 pandemic showed the series of terrible conditions in the world health-care system, and the need for an international powerful movement by the working class and peoples for a radical change in every sector of society to defeat capitalism-imperialism and establish socialism:

1-We saw how ill prepared the different governments were. In the province of Quebec, three successive governments have constantly reduced the health care budget;

2-We saw how the multimillionaire pharma industry of the big capitalist-imperialist countries refuses to give the vaccine formula to very well-equipped laboratories;

Addendum

George Gruenthal – New York, USA

While in Canada people are fighting to preserve free, universal health care, in the US we are fighting for this as

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something we never had. In this country it is often misnamed “Medicare for all” (misnamed because Medicare only pays for 80% of the outrageously high cost of hospital stays, so it is not free). Almost all medical care is through private hospitals, HMOs and doctors. One of the positive aspects of Bernie Sanders’ program was his support of a public health-care system. But of course, the Democratic Party leadership has refused to take it up. And even with “Obamacare,” there are tens of millions of people in the US without health insurance.

Sections of this article used Wikipedia as an information source.

The few public hospitals that exist are mainly in big cities, and they charge based on one’s income, so they are only free for the poorest people. These hospitals are severely underfunded, so that it can take months to see one’s doctor. As a result, private medical clinics have sprung up, such as City MD in New York. These take walk-in patients, but the quality of care varies with the doctor, over whom you have no choice. (Ironically, one of the arguments against a public health-care system by the US medical establishment was that they claimed that then one could not choose your own doctor.) And of course, you have to pay!



The Power of the Iranian People, a letter to The Torch

The majority of the people in Iran, in my opinion, have reached the conclusion that the Islamic Republic, governing with absolute rule, will not solve their problems. Therefore, the workers, women, students, intellectuals, writers, and those struggling to make ends meet, don't accept this government. They are protesting in the streets, spontaneously and intermittently. Some have been arrested and jailed.

In the recent election, the majority of the people did not participate, There was no progressive alternative so people chose not to vote.

The solution for Iran is socialism: economic justice and freedom of speech, the press, political parties, religion and freedom for women.

The imperialist powers and the reactionaries, would like to prevent Iran from becoming a progressive, prosperous country.

I am hopeful that Iran, with its rich history, will achieve progress, as it has done in the past. Only the people inside Iran will achieve this goal.

Noshin Hatami



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www.IndependentWorkersParty.org

Below are two articles on the measures to vaccinate people against Covid-19. The Torch has not taken a position on this, and is raising this issue for discussion and debate.

CDC acknowledges thousands of deaths from Covid-19 vaccines, but refuses to publicize them

By George Gruenthal

Every day on television and elsewhere one sees ads to “Get the vax,” and how it is “Safe, Effective and Free,” as part of the attempt by the government to get everyone in the United States vaccinated against Covid.

However, it turns out that for many people, the vaccine is not safe at all. Thousands have died from the vaccine, and tens of thousands have been hospitalized or had other serious reactions.

This is not information from any “anti-vax” group, but from the CDC itself. It has a site called VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System), which keeps a regularly updated list of adverse reactions to various vaccines, including the one for Covid-19. To check the info below, go to: <https://wonder.cdc.gov/vaers.html>

The table below reflects the figures from the site as of 8/30/2021.

Event Outcome	United States/ Territories/Unknown
Life Threatening	8,633
Permanent Disability	7,793
Hospitalized	31,328
Death	6,860

One could say that if there are over 5,000 deaths and tens of thousands of other serious adverse reactions among the over 150 million fully-vaccinated people in the U.S., that is a small percentage. But first, that is no consolation to the families of those who died from the vaccine, or to the tens of thousands of others who suffered serious adverse reactions.

Primarily this shows the dishonesty of the CDC and others who knowingly promote the notion that the vaccines are “safe, effective and free.” No wonder that there is a large degree of skepticism of people towards the vaccine and the health policies of the U.S. government generally, particularly among Afro-Americans and Latinos in the U.S., who have the lowest vaccination rates.

Now de Blasio, Biden and many corporations want to make the vaccines mandatory, or at best with some alternative such as weekly negative Covid tests. Medical procedures were supposed to be based on “informed consent.” But by concealing these figures we are no longer being in-

formed, and by making the vaccines mandatory we no longer have the right to consent.

The site is somewhat complicated to use, here are detailed instructions.

At the site mentioned above, go to VAERS Data Search In 3. Select vaccine characteristics, change All Vaccine Products to Covid-19, and leave Vaccine Manufacturer at All Manufacturers and Vaccine Dose at All Doses

In 4. Select location, age, gender, change State/Territory to United States/Territories/Unknown.

Choose one of the Event Categories listed above, or choose a different one.

On the question of Covid-19

By Antonio Artuso, Montreal, Canada

This is my reply to George Gruenthal’s viewpoint above.

His article only covers a limited number of questions – (1) the lack of information on the danger of the vaccines; (2) the right to be informed, (3) the right to consent or to refuse the vaccine.

I agree with the two first points, but I have hesitations on the third point.

Concerning the third point, citizens have rights and obligations. There are two conflicting types of rights: (a) the individual right to consent or to refuse a particular vaccine, and (b) the collective right to be protected by the government when it is clear that a disease is spreading and killing many people and when science, as far as it is advanced, clearly proves that said vaccine clearly protects most of the people vaccinated even if it has adverse effects or kills a very small percentage of people. And, again, the citizens have obligations.

There are many more questions that were not covered by the article:

Is the article asking for other measures to be implemented by the government, the pharma industry or other institutions?

The figures on deaths and other adverse events only represent a small percentage of the more than 150 million people who are fully vaccinated.

Is it better to vaccinate people and follow the protective measures or not?

Are the measures proposed by the governments necessary, or are they measures to domesticate the workers and people to accustom them to capitalist-imperialist domination, and to train them to be obedient?

The members of my family and I do not at all trust the corrupt, venal, capitalist pharmaceutical industry. However,

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we (including three members who work in the medical field), follow without doubt or fear the measures proposed the federal and provincial governments in Canada to combat Covid-19.

In Canada, most of the citizens still trust the Canadian health-care system, the workers, research and lab technicians. The medical personnel work hard and perform their tasks and their duties conscientiously, painstakingly, with pride and vigilance. Although we don't trust at all the Canadian mass media, from time to time, the latter present whistleblowers from within the medical sector who denounce wrongdoings.

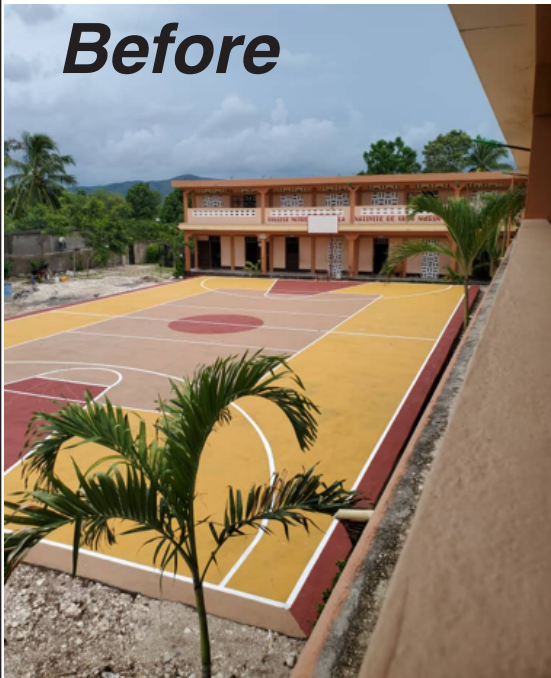
We are maybe wrong.

Concerning the U.S. mass media, we are surprised how Covid-19, science and truth are weaponized and politicized by the bombardment of news for and against the measures proposed against Covid-19, of both fake and true news in the social media and in the U.S. mass media. In Canada, the mass media are united in support of the government measures.



For the Haitian Youth

Before



Association Moun Gros-Marin à Montréal (People's Association Gros-Marin in Montreal)

This group helped build and support this school for 500 children in Gros-Marin, Haiti. It was destroyed in the earthquake there in August.

The Torch managing committee encourages everyone reading to contribute as much as they are able to the collection of resources for the purpose of rebuilding the school pictured in these images of before and after the earthquake in Haiti.

Donations are accepted via Paypal at:

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After



The U.S. Defeat in Afghanistan

By George Gruenthal

Every supporter of the right of nations to self-determination must recognize that the U.S. defeat in Afghanistan is a good thing, and not just the result of a deal between the U.S. and the Taliban.

The war caused immense destruction to the country, including at least 47,000 Afghan civilian casualties. Some 2.7 million people were forced to flee abroad, and another 4 million were displaced within the country. The war cost about \$2 trillion. This was a high-tech war, an Obama-era tactic to allow for relatively low U.S. casualties. Of the 100,000 US troops who were in the country by 2011, some 2,448 killed, in addition to 3,846 US contractors, another tactic showing the privatization of war. In Vietnam, some 2 million civilians were killed, as well as over 58,000 US troops.

The mainstream press is crying crocodile tears over the collaborators who have been trying to flee through Kabul airport, fearing Taliban retaliation. Although some of them are certainly low-level personnel (translators, cooks on U.S. bases, etc.), most are probably high-level functionaries of the puppet regime, who deserve no sympathy.

The U.S. occupation of Afghanistan lasted almost 20 years, making this the longest war in U.S. history. To this time period should be added the years during the 1980s that the U.S. spent in supporting and financing the Mujahedin (armed Islamic fighters) against the pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan. It was from one of the factions of the Mujahedin that the Taliban emerged in 1994 in the civil war that began after the fall of the pro-Soviet government in 1992, and they took over the country in 1996. The U.S. first supported the Taliban, but when they did not go along with everything that the U.S. wanted (apparently mainly the deal with the now defunct U.S. oil company Unocal for a gas pipeline through the country), it then turned against them. This shows once again that imperialism has no permanent friends, just permanent interests.

The excuse for the U.S. occupation of the country was of course the attacks of September 11, 2001, on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, led by al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. The Taliban had asked for evidence that bin Laden was in Afghanistan, which the U.S. refused to give. And when he was found and killed by U.S. marines in 2011, he was in U.S. "ally" Pakistan, not in Afghanistan.

The fact that the U.S. was forced out militarily does not mean that U.S. monopoly interests will not return. Maybe the CIA will convince the Taliban to continue to allow Afghanistan to export large quantities of opium, which had "increased exponentially" under the U.S. occupation.



Kabul, 2021



Saigon, 1975

Afghanistan will now become another area of contention between the U.S. and Russia and China. The latter two have already been offering aid to the Taliban government.

The Taliban are a reactionary force

When the Taliban were previously in power, they established an extreme form of Sharia (Islamic law). This was particularly oppressive to women, who were forced to wear a burka (a black cloth that covers the whole body except for slits for the eyes and mouth). They were not allowed to go out of the house unless accompanied by their husband or other male relative. They were generally deprived of the right to a job or education. The Taliban were also intolerant of all other religions, including other forms of Islam. (Note that these restrictions are similar to those imposed by US ally Saudi Arabia.) No wonder that some two million people have already crossed the long border with Iran, many trying to reach Turkey and then Western Europe.

The Taliban claim that this time they will act differently, but this seems to be mainly for foreign consumption, to make it easier for them to make deals with the Western powers (including the U.S.) as well as Russia and China. We must do all we can to give active solidarity with the Afghan people, especially the women, in their fight against imperialism and religious obscurantism!

"Taliban does not practice the anti-U.S. style of fundamentalism practiced by Iran—it is closer to the Saudi model," Zalmay Khalilzad wrote in a 1996 op-ed for The Washington Post. The Afghanistan-born Khalilzad was a special US envoy to Afghanistan and former Unocal adviser.

Amazon fired him. Now, he's helping Staten Island workers unionize

Amazon Labor Union says it has already collected several hundred signatures in support

By Megan Rose Dickey—April 28, 2021

Christian Smalls has been sitting outside of Amazon's Staten Island warehouse every day for the past week. He's working to get as many workers as possible to sign union cards with the Amazon Labor Union and plans to present these cards to Amazon as early as June, Smalls told Protocol.

Smalls and Amazon have a complicated history. The company fired him from his warehouse managerial position last March after he organized a protest against unsafe working conditions at the facility. Since then, Smalls has sued Amazon and founded The Congress of Essential Workers, a nonprofit organization focused on helping workers achieve better working conditions. The Congress, in turn, has created its own union, the Amazon Labor Union.

Amazon Labor Union is unaffiliated with any major union, unlike the recent Bessemer, Alabama unionization drive for Amazon warehouse workers with the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. By forming a new, independent union, Smalls hopes to be able to have a fresh start.

"We have nothing to compare ourselves to," Smalls said. "That puts us at an advantage. Workers can't say we already tried it and failed. When talking to workers, we can say this is us creating this together as workers of Amazon. We're all in this together."

Amazon Labor Union originally intended to focus on JFK8, the fulfillment center in Staten Island, "but Amazon just seems to keep popping up buildings everywhere," Smalls said.

So in addition to JFK8, Amazon Labor Union is seeking to unionize workers at three other locations nearby: two delivery stations (DYX2 and DYY6) and a sorting station (LDJ5).

The union estimates JFK8 has about 5,000 employees and has about a couple hundred employees at the other buildings. Already, Smalls said several hundred workers have signed union cards.

But it's going to be an uphill battle. Amazon has already begun sending messages to workers and posting signs in the JFK8 warehouse advocating against unions. In one message, Amazon told workers "you give up the right to speak for yourself" if you sign a union authorization card. Amazon also displayed anti-union messaging on the TVs in the JFK8 warehouse.

"And from what we heard today, managers are already talking to workers in small groups, pretty much lying to them," Smalls said. "It's like, 'Oh, sign if you want to, but don't sign, because Amazon's better.'"

Amazon reportedly engaged in similar behavior during the Bessemer union drive. RWDSU has since alleged Amazon



Christian Smalls has spent the last several days organizing outside of Amazon's JFK8 warehouse in Staten Island—Photo: Amazon Labor Union

interfered with the union drive and has asked the National Labor Relations Board to overturn the election results.

Protocol has reached out to Amazon but has yet to hear back.

Fighting the good fight

Smalls does not get paid for this type of work. He's relying on money from a GoFundMe campaign that one of his supporters set up for him last year, as well as unemployment benefits.

"I'm out here fighting the good fight," Smalls said. "And, you know, I'm OK for right now, but it's not sustainable. I don't get paid for media appearances. Everybody assumes people make all this money off of these things but no, everything I'm putting out is free. And I just think that the story and the struggle is more important than any time of money. Hopefully, I'll receive mine with the legal battle, but yeah, I'm just going to hold it out until then."

For the drive itself, Smalls is currently funding all of its operations out of pocket. But the union has its own fundraising page that is seeking to raise \$5,000 to help cover the cost of things such as pamphlets, web-hosting costs and to help support any workers who may be fired during the union drive.

If this union drive proves to be successful, Smalls envisions Amazon Labor Union representing warehouse workers across the nation. Smalls said he's spoken with workers all over the country during the last year who are hoping to unionize at other Amazon facilities.

"If we're successful here, we'll be spreading like wildfire."

reprinted from Protocol.com

About 2,000 workers in Staten Island signed cards to be represented by the Amazon Labor Union. The National Labor Relations Board will hold a hearing on their petition on November 15

The present context of Cold War promulgation by Western hegemony demands careful, clear analysis of historical experience. The following tract is essential reading by the masses. This unpublished work will give the issue a dimension that informs the class struggle and its most able agents of change. With special thanks to the Saturday Free School in North Philadelphia and its teacher and founder Dr. Anthony Monterio. [Each new issue of The Torch will serialize the book while the complete work can be read at: <https://redstarpublishers.org/DuBoisRussiaAmerica.pdf>]

CHAPTER I

A QUEST FOR CLARITY

Erastus Milo Cravath, first president of Fisk University, looked like God. Certainly like the God which the Congregational Sunday school painted on my child mind. He was tall, a little stooped, with long white beard and silver hair, his face was misty, with lineaments like those limned by fifteenth century Italian painters; and his blue eyes hid beneath bushed brows, whence they gleamed, now stern, now somber. Sometimes we students thought they twinkled; as when he earnestly asked the Lord, as he often did, to "forgive us for our short-comings;" we were convinced he referred to little Cummings, a fellow-student who was an imp.

I was just turned twenty when we five seniors entered the President's class in Philosophy: Tyndal, dignified but dumb; Lenora, sleepy but keen, with her long black Indian hair; Edmondson, then, elegant and scholarly; Mamie, cold, spotless and bitter; and I, the youngest and most unsophisticated. To me college was very serious business. I was especially thrilled with this course. At last I was getting at the inner meaning of Things and about to face ultimate Truth. I was weary of "elements" and "introductions" and second-hand comments and descriptions.

The new text said that we were to study the "Stream of Consciousness," without reference to Space and with no limits of Time. Needless to say that eventually I was in part disappointed. On occasion when we were apparently splitting consciousness into unrelated parts, I ventured to remind our grave teacher that the knowing Mind could not thus be limited in space; he answered dryly, "But it must be somewhere!"

One thing, however, that course of study did was to open vistas and resolves. I was going to know Truth. I was going to stop at no little college for colored folk in Tennessee; I was going to seek the best and largest institutions in the world until I knew what Life was and Why.

Good old Professor Chase, who taught everything called "science" and who always advised his pupils on ways of eventually earning a living, could arouse little response in me. I was not interested in earning a living. I was going to study; and when the Hartford Theological Seminary offered me a scholarship, I was almost rude. I did not regard theology as study nor was I going to be a minister. What I

regarded thereafter as being Captain of my soul was of course mostly good luck; but sure enough next year, after graduation, I appeared at Harvard. It was not the Harvard of the Boston Brahmins nor the Hasty Pudding Club, of neither of which had I ever heard; nor had I the slightest interest in Yale games. I entered the Harvard of William James, Josiah Royce, George Santayana, Nathaniel Shaler and Albert Bushnell Hart and they gave me their friendship.

Josiah Royce, with his enormous red head and incomparable mind, led me to a conception of absolute reality through philosophic idealism. This derived of course from the thinking of the Master, Emanuel Kant, and with the young George Santayana, incredibly handsome, I read the Critique der reinen Vernunft and staggered somewhat uncertainly down to the vast Hegelian system of universal comprehension. But no mention was made of Karl Marx and his application of this interpretation of the development of thought and action to the daily work and wage of men. I am sure Santayana would have regarded this as unworthy of the high aims of Philosophy.

William James in the Fall of 1888 took over Ethics, while Palmer was on leave. By his pragmatic shift from absolute right and wrong to conduct that would bring the best results, he guided my thinking from the absolute to the relative and from systems to human beings. He emphasized this by setting me to study medieval Scholasticism and its intricate but futile and sterile thinking; he advised me to avoid metaphysics if I could. I did so, and it was Francis Peabody's course on social problems which let new light in on my life interests. Peabody was a clergyman rather than a scientist and he was regarded rather lightly by the greater minds of the University. His course was orientated toward philanthropy and organized charity, rather than poverty-stricken and ignorant and ailing men. But it awakened me. I began to sense something wrong in the underlying organization of human work and income and something not entirely race prejudice. I began to hear of Robert Owen, Saint-Simon, Fourier and Proudhon and their criticism of modern industry. But still there came no word of Karl Marx.

(Continued in the next issue)

