



# CANADA

## ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW ERA

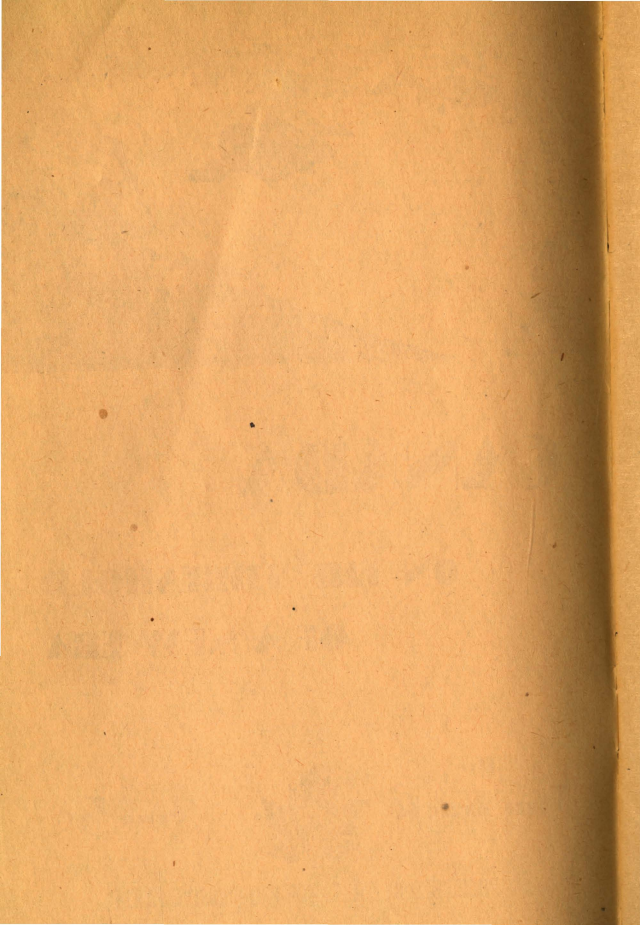
By

**Tim Buck**



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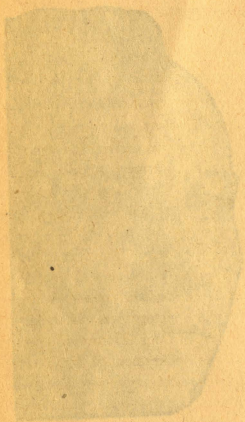
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*National Leader,  
Labor-Progressive Party*





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# On the Threshold of a New Age

BY TIM BUCK

*Text of Address at the Annual Labor Festival  
Toronto, August 11, 1946*

**A** NEW SPIRIT is abroad in Canada; it is the spirit of social progress—the progress for which the war against Fascism was fought.

During the war the masses of our people served and sacrificed. Our sons offered their lives, workers and farmers stepped up production, the trade union movement adopted its no-strike pledge, the majority of Canadians subordinated their immediate personal interests to the interests of the nation in winning the war. In return, the government and many spokesmen for big business promised us a new age of broadening progress, social security and peace “for many generations” when victory was achieved.

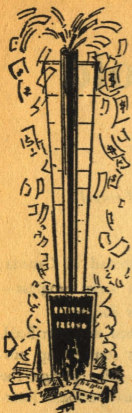


**TIM BUCK**

**National Leader  
of the  
Labor-Progressive  
Party**

The promises of our Dominion government and of the spokesmen of big business, even their most extravagant promises, were not beyond the bounds of material possibility. Canadian experience during the first year of peace shows that all those promises could be fulfilled today by a government ready to place the interests of the people of Canada first and carry through the necessary legislation.

Mr. J. L. Ilsley announced in his recent budget speech that Canadians produced goods and services to the value of more than 11 billion dollars during the first postwar year. That was considerably more than twice the dollar



value of our annual production in any peacetime year before the war. Canadians can produce just as abundantly for peace as we did for war if we are allowed to.

As the second national convention of the Labor-Progressive Party emphasized, the new high productivity of Canadian industry makes it absolutely necessary to increase the purchasing power of the masses of the people.<sup>1</sup> In years of business prosperity before the war the dollar value of all goods and services marketed within Canada averaged somewhat less than 5 billion dollars, but now, with our increased productivity and higher prices, goods to the value of 10 billion dollars or more will have to find a market within Canada every year if full employment is to be maintained. Without that, mass unemployment will be inevitable, and it will strike in a relatively short time.

## MONOPOLIES OBSTRUCT NATIONAL PROGRESS

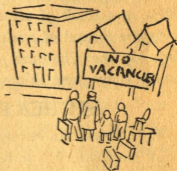
BIG BUSINESS understands the significance of the above facts very well. But the main emphasis in its policies since the war has reflected its short-sighted, grasping ambition to meet the new situation by raising prices in Canada while preventing any commensurate increases in the incomes of the masses of the people. Mr. Bracken and the Progressive-Conservative Party which he leads say bluntly that they want to abolish all controls. The King government does not proclaim its agreement with the Tories, but its policies are directed to the same end. The policies of the King government are clearly aimed at raising Canadian prices up to approximately the same levels as prices in the United



(1)—“For Peace, Progress, Socialism,” Report of Second National Convention of the Labor-Progressive Party, Page 19.

States. The Wartime Prices and Trade Board has authorized generous price increases for upwards of 1,000 manufactured articles and has abolished price ceilings altogether for many others. One result of the government's price policy is that workers' food now costs 45 per cent. more than it did before the war. The cynical attitude of the government towards price levels and inflation is to be seen in the method by which it is dealing with the housing crisis. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians, including more than 100,000 men who served overseas, are without proper housing accommodation. The Labor-Progressive Party submitted a brief to the government on this problem early this year. We pointed out the danger of a catastrophic situation unless the government took action to guarantee construction of 50,000 low-rental houses over and above private building activity.<sup>2</sup>

Everything that our Party emphasized in that brief has been proven correct by the development of the housing situation this year. The government has calculatingly allowed the situation to deteriorate, while tens of thousands of workers remain unemployed. Mr. C. D. Howe has now, at last, admitted on behalf of the government that the housing situation is extremely serious and will become worse as winter approaches. How does the government propose to solve this problem? Do they propose to undertake, now, construction of large numbers of low-rental homes? No! According to the very best information, the government is planning to "solve" the housing crisis by lifting controls so that the prices of homes and the level of rent will rise enough to eliminate tens of thousands of prospective purchasers and force a hundred thousand tenants into slums. If rent controls are removed this fall, as is probable, there will be 10,000 evictions across Canada and many of the people evicted will have no place to go.



## THE FALSE CRY OF INFLATION

THE MONOPOLIES and the government are masking their policy of raising prices by a highly-organized propaganda campaign to delude

(2)—“For Peace, Progress, Socialism,” Report of Second National Convention of the Labor-Progressive Party, Page 23.

the masses of the people with the fallacious idea that the trade union movement is to blame for price increases. The fundamental facts about prices and inflation, and the causes of inflation, are being recklessly misrepresented. Mr. Donald Gordon declares that wage increases of more than 10 cents an hour are liable to bring on inflation. Mr. Gordon's arguments being more threatening than convincing, Mr. Abbott, Minister of National Defence and Acting Minister of Finance, is put forward to commit the Dominion Department of Finance to a completely false presentation of the relationship between wages and inflation.

The government's propaganda misrepresents the sources of inflation and thereby obscures the real danger. The danger of inflation does not start with wages. This can be illustrated by the situation in Canada today. In our country there are inflationary factors at work, and they are well known to every economist who understands his business. They are, basically, the tremendous governmental borrowings from the banks, the expansion of commercial bank credit and the long term trend towards increasing velocity of circulation. These are the decisive inflationary factors, not wages. These factors each emphasize the inflationary trend in Canadian economy but they do not at the present time constitute a serious immediate threat of inflation unless, as a result of some catastrophe, national production is allowed to decline instead of being expanded tremendously as is now possible. Certainly the Chairman of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board should know these things and explain them clearly to the people.

## HIGHER PROFITS, LOW WAGES

OUR NATIONAL PRODUCTION has doubled, we must consume more if full employment is to be maintained, but the majority of our people do not yet receive incomes big enough to enable them to buy an adequate supply of even the necessities of life. The official report of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics on incomes of the people reveals the following striking contrast between the big incomes of the few and the poverty of the many in our country.

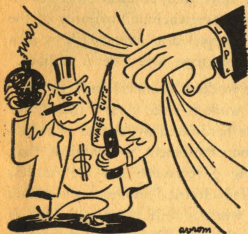
Of the people gainfully employed in Canada, 63,205 have incomes of \$5,000 per year or more. This group constitutes only 1.8 per cent. of all who are "gainfully employed"



(which includes bank directors) but its members receive \$645,361,000, which is 13.4 per cent. of the total of all incomes.

1,553,390 have incomes of \$1,000 per year or less. This group constitutes 44.8 per cent. of all who are gainfully employed but the aggregate income of all its members is only \$799,750,000, or 16.7 per cent. of the total of all incomes.

The Second National Convention of the Labor-Progressive Party was correct in declaring that the fight to abolish substandard wage levels and to raise the general level of wages is a fight in the interest of Canada as a whole.<sup>3</sup>



Those figures also emphasize the cynical, cold-blooded character of the tactics being utilized by big industry all across this country. The Montreal Cottons Corporation at Valleyfield, Quebec, imports thugs and provokes violence in its efforts to smash the textile workers' picket line.

Stelco in Hamilton resorts to measures only a little short of the setting up of a separate feudal regime, independent of the laws of the country. In the hope of weakening the solidarity of the workers, local politicians agitate to enable Col. George Drew to send in Provincial police so as to establish, outside, an armed guard for the feudal regime already operating inside. Massey-Harris Corporation closes down for vacations and stock-taking, but spreads a scare story to the effect that the shutdown is forced upon the company by steel shortages due to the strike.

The big corporations are resorting to increasingly unscrupulous measures. Their aim is to force workers back to the conditions which prevailed before the war, to re-establish their own complete and

(3)—“For Peace, Progress, Socialism,” Report of Second National Convention of the Labor-Progressive Party, Page 25.

unquestioned control of the wage levels at which workers are hired and the conditions under which they work.

## **LABOR SOLIDARITY WILL WIN**

THE BOSSES will not succeed in their plan. They cannot prevent wage increases if the present high degree of labor solidarity is maintained. The war changed the world and in changing the world it changed the labor movement—including the labor movement in Canada. Labor, by its self-discipline and self-sacrifice, earned a new status in Canada during the war. This new status and the spirit of solidarity which accompanies it has transformed wage struggles from desperate battles to maintain picket lines into political struggles in which the workers are supported by the overwhelming majority of the people and the government has been compelled to retreat inch by inch from its original position of "no wage increase over 5 cents an hour."

That is why lake seamen, lumber workers, chemical workers, mine workers, sections of the electrical workers and many others have secured wage increases in spite of the hard-faced opposition of monopoly capital. That is why the labor movement is confident that, despite the manoeuvres of the King government and the ruthless opposition of the steel and rubber and electrical interests, the strikes of the steel, rubber and electrical workers will be won! That is why democratic Canadians demand that the Dominion government take the three steel plants over, settle with the workers and maintain steel production until the corporations are ready to negotiate an agreement with the union. That is why there is increasing confidence throughout the ranks of the labor movement that now is the time to abolish substandard wages, to build up the trade union movement, and to win for the working people increased authority in determining what their living standards shall be.

## **THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA**

THE FIGHT of the working people for higher living standards is an integral part of the world-wide striving towards the economic security, the broader democracy, the higher civilization, of Socialism.

The entire world is in the throes of a historic struggle. The striking achievements of the U.S.S.R. in both peace and war, which

have demonstrated the superiority of socialism to all the peoples, have inspired hundreds of millions to take up the struggle for that new and better way of life. Half a dozen European nations have elected peoples' governments to complete the destruction of fascism, re-organize their national economies and carry through the transition to Socialism. The many-millioned peoples of Asia are determined—and fighting as never before in history—to win national freedom from imperialist domination. Hundreds of millions of people in China are on the march for "China's New Democracy" under the leadership of China's great and heroic Communist Party.



Contemporaneously with the rising political struggle of the people for social progress there is maturing a history-making revolution in the material basis of modern civilization. Technical and scientific developments have brought about a situation in which mankind as a whole is increasingly confronted with the alternatives of advance to a radically higher stage of civilization, or the subordination of peoples' interests in the capitalist states to preparations for a third world war—which, in the age of atomic power, would involve the horrible prospect of the complete destruction of civilization.

Unlocking the secret of the atom must eventually bring changes which will make the atom bomb appear as an incidental product of the scientific revolution which use of atomic energy will bring. The vastness of such changes may be visualized by considering the changes which came about when men learned how to utilize steam, to power their mines and factories and ships and trains. It is only 117 years since Stephenson's locomotive, "The Rocket," ran its tests. At that time the world was still jogging along at about six miles per hour, as it had from time immemorial. Steam railways and the multitude of changes which accompanied their development stepped it up to sixty miles per hour in one lifetime. That wasn't all. The Industrial Revolution changed more than the methods of production, it changed humanity's way of life—it transformed civilization.

The accumulating wonders of the Industrial Revolution and ap-

plied science brought the magic of electricity. Electrification, mass production, and the fascinating changes these developments have wrought in every aspect of our lives mark the culmination of the Industrial Revolution.

But during the last three decades a new and even more wonderful revolution has been in the making. The world's scientists, peering purposefully into the innermost secrets of matter, have revealed to mankind a new and wonderful world, of possibilities as yet unmeasured. Dyson Carter has described the amazing possibilities for the production of new materials of infinite variety and utility; materials which can reduce our dependence upon scarce natural products while raising the standard of life for farmers and city dwellers alike. While chemists have been revealing the possibilities of new and wonderful materials, physicists have discovered and harnessed the magic of electronics in a thousand ways; from the "magic eye" which opens a door when one approaches or discards faulty products, to the marvels of television, radar, and the remote control by which planes are now flown thousands of miles without a pilot and directed through intricate manoeuvres even to the extent of dropping bombs at any selected spot by radio control.

Today, these marvels of chemistry and physics are the novel highlights of applied science, but the hundreds of achievements which they typify have brought mankind to the threshold of a new era. The miracle of atomic energy harnessed in the service of mankind will make the methods and processes of which these wonders are now but the novel highlights into the determining scientific foundation of a new stage of civilization. The "scientific revolution" which the harnessing of atomic energy will bring, will confront mankind with possibilities for advance surpassing the achievements of the industrial revolution in an even more striking manner than that revolution has transformed the world during the past 120 years.



When utilization of atomic energy is fully mastered, things of which we have not yet even dreamed will be possible. Power will be available in places where no power is available today. Disease will be brought further under man's control. Climates may be modified and products of the soil will be diversified, controlled, and increased to an amazing degree. Life will be richer as well as longer, because the scientific revolution will make it possible to raise the standards of life and leisure, and therefore of culture, as well as the level of production and the extent of human knowledge. These and numerous other changes, which cannot yet even be predicted, are clearly possible within the lifetime of many of us if peace is maintained. We are on the threshold of a new era.

The one great question which casts the shadow of doubt and fear across the shining vista of unprecedented possibilities for mankind is that question, "Can peace be maintained?"

## DEFEAT THE WAR MONGERS

MEN'S HOPES for a peace which will last "for many generations" have been shaken by postwar developments. The nature of these developments, and the postwar aims and policies from which they stem, have been highlighted recently by reports of the new and fantastic instruments being experimented with by the United States Army. Using Hitler's V-2 rocket bomb as a sample from which to start, and assisted by a corps of German scientists who worked upon its original development in Nazi Germany, the United States Army is now striving to perfect a "guided missile" which, it claims, will travel at a speed of 3,600 miles per hour (almost five times the speed of sound), and can be directed accurately at any city within a range of ten thousand miles. The United States War Department proposes that Canada should agree to establishment of launching sites in the Canadian North, from which location, its experts claim, United States guided missiles, loaded with atomic bombs, could destroy every important industrial, commercial, communications, or administrative centre in Asia and Europe at will. It is in support of this provocative



scheme that Col. George Drew, Premier of Ontario, works so assiduously to stir up sentiment in favor of war against the Soviet Union.

But Canada is the country most endangered by the provocative plans of the United States War Department. Guided missiles can, obviously, be fired both ways and the very aggressive manner in which the United States is pressing such developments must compel other nations to do likewise. The top scientists of the United States have declared that it is folly to pretend that other countries cannot solve the problem of atomic energy. Furthermore, the technical preparations of the United States government, combined with its aggressive insistence upon playing a dominant role in shaping the economic and political systems under which other nations shall live, confront the other nations of the world with the alternative of equally effective technical and military preparations for their own defence, or the prospect of domination by the American banking and imperialist interests. "World peace and reconstruction are in serious danger."<sup>4</sup>

## A PEOPLE'S COALITION FOR PEACE AND SOCIALISM

EVERY DEMOCRATIC CANADIAN must ask himself or herself the question: "Which way Canada?" Shall our national policies be directed to restoration of the conditions of the 1930's at home and struggles to re-establish imperialist domination of the world? Our answer must be an emphatic NO! Democratic Canadians must fight for national policies which will raise the standards of life and security for all our people: French, English, workers, farmers, salaried and small business people. They must be policies of co-operation with all the democratic peoples who are striving to establish in their own countries economic democracy as the indispensable basis for the full and complete political democracy that is possible only through Socialism.



The above is the inescapable choice before all democratic people. It is true, therefore, to say that the struggle between the forces

(4)—"For Peace, Progress, Socialism," Report of Second National Convention of the Labor-Progressive Party, Page 51.

fighting for enduring peace and the forces seeking a new war is an integral and indispensable feature of the struggle for Socialism.

The epoch of imperialist wars will be ended only when Socialism becomes the predominant social order and leads world civilization. The spread and flowering of Socialism over a large part of the old world is now assured if the imperialists are curbed and their criminal war plans thwarted. Thus the millions of democratic people whose main desire is enduring peace and the millions who desire Socialism, are all confronted by the necessity to defeat the aims and policies of a common enemy, i.e., imperialist finance-capital and its international monopolies and cartels.

Clearly the monopolists can be defeated if the democratic forces are united—but *only* if they are united. That is why the second national convention of the Labor-Progressive Party urged the establishment of a great coalition of democratic forces: "People's unity against pro-fascist reaction is the urgent, imperative need; and bold initiative and leadership by the labor movement is the prime condition for its achievement." 5

A great People's Coalition, uniting all progressive forces—L.P.P., C.C.F., the trade unions, the farm organizations, French and English speaking—can defeat the monopolists and their political servants in Canada. Through a People's Coalition, and defeat of the parties of big capital, progressive forces can carry through the measures necessary to protect our people against the ravages of cyclical crisis and to help prevent a third world war. That advance alone will be tremendous. In achieving it millions of our fellow-Canadians will learn through their own experience that, as well as mastery over the mighty elemental forces of nature, man now has



(5)—"For Peace, Progress, Socialism," Report of Second National Convention of the Labor-Progressive Party, Page 58.

the power to direct social development, to abolish want, abolish insecurity, abolish war. With the growth of this realization the united democratic forces will go forward invincibly to the next higher stage of civilization in our country—Socialism.



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(1)—For Facts, Figures, Statistics, Report of Second National Convention of the Labor Progressive Party, Page 10.



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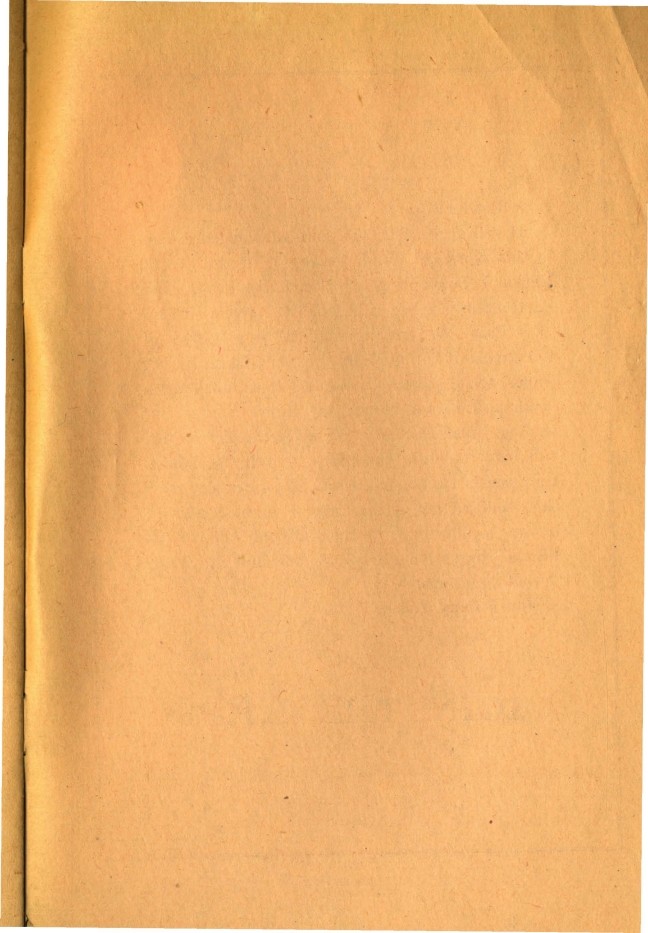
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