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MOSCOW

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The Soviets not only gave ~~women~~ ^{women} the vote and put them on the same legal plane as man, but supplemented on emancipation by educative and ameliorative measures. Thus, among the simple peasant women, most promising specimens are attached to sections of the local Soviets (municipalities) and various social institutions. There they learnt the rudiments of social service and civic activity for at least three months, receiving a ~~xxx~~ salary in lieu of their ordinary earnings. These methods have already yielded tangible results: there are 300,000 women members of local Soviets, 1,200 on Provincial Soviets, and 10 out of the 500 members of the Central Executive Committee - which last compares very favourably with the six women in the British House of Commons with its 615 members. No less than 60% of the doctors in the Soviet Union are women. Comrade Kameneva, who spoke on this question with enthusiasm of a suffragette, said that for her one of the greatest triumphs of the Revolution was that it had placed Russian women, historically a backward class, - in the vanguard of the Feminist movement.

Are Elections Free?

Our second interview was with the Secretary of the Moscow City Soviet - a counterpart of the Bombay Commissioner. For three hours, we bombarded him with all the questions which ~~are~~ ^{our} critical brain could devise. I personally was interested in finding out how far the ~~election~~ ^{our} to the Soviet were free and unfettered. The officials are elected by the Soviet, which is elected by the men and ~~xxxxx~~ women over eighteen years in age. But out of a population of 2 million, 50,000 are disfranchised. These are mostly Nepmen who "exploit" (i.e. hire) labour, priests, and other persons who have actually opposed the Revolution. But the list of disqualified persons grow shorter every year, even ~~xx-officials~~ ex-officers of the "White" or counter-revolutionary armies, who have been loyal to the new "regime" since, being given the vote this year.

The elections are not on the basis of territorial constituencies, but of functional representation. Thus, factories elect one member for every 1,000 workers. Classes like Doctors, journalists and housewives which are scattered all over the city meet together to elect their representative. The composition of the present Soviet is interesting: 38% manual workers, 25% clerical and administrative workers, 22% officials, 4% officers and soldiers of the Red Army, 4% housewives, ~~3~~ 3 1/2% students over 18 years of age, 1% shop-keepers "not" employing labour, 1% cripples and invalids, ~~8~~ 1/2% professional men, 1/2% domestic persons and 1/2% unemployed. It is quite evident that this body represents the broad mass of citizens infinitely better than say, the Bombay Municipal Corporation. But the ~~XXXXXX~~ method of elections is by show of hands instead of by secret ballot. "Ah!" says the anti-Bolshevist triumphantly, "I told you so! This beautiful democracy exists only on paper. Why not a secret ballot?" To this, the X Soviet answer is that, while a ballot may be necessary in capitalistic countries in order to safeguard a voter against coercion by his landlord or his employer, in Workers' State like Russia, it is cumbersome and unnecessary. We made the most extensive inquiries into this matter wherever we went. The method of voting was no doubt established after the Revolution in order to subject the voting to the scrutiny of the Communist Party. But for the past few years, at any rate, this scrutiny has not been allowed up with any action against the man who votes the Communist candidate. The fact, for instance, that 30% of the members of the Moscow Soviets are non-party men who defeated Communist candidates shows that thousands of citizens must have voted for them without any hindrance. Besides, many of the village Soviets have non-Communist majorities. Indeed, in a Ukraine village I visited, there was not a single communist among the officials or members of the Soviets. We may safely say that voting in Russian elections is today ~~not~~ quite unfettered. What enabled the communists to give this right is their own popularity with the mass workers and suppression of all rival party elections. The last part of their policy the Communists frankly justify as being necessary for the maintenance of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat until the electorate is educated enough to be trusted with the gigantic task of constructing the Socialist State over 1/6th of the surface of the globe in the face of concerted opposition. from the rulers of the rest of the world.

Lenin's Mausoleum.

Of my memories in Russia, there is one I shall not easily forget - that of Lenin dead. His Mausoleum just outside the walls of the Kremlin is open to the public from 8 to 9 a'clock every evening. When we got there, it was raining hard, but all the same there was a queue some 50 yds. long of people waiting to get a glimpse of the dead leader. Luckily, having heard of the queue beforehand, we had obtained a letter of introduction which enabled us to go straight into the room where, in a glass case, the great revolutionist lay embalmed. At his head and feet were two Red Army soldiers almost as still as a sleeping figure. Along the passage which ran round the case the people were passing reverently, on their toes lest they should awake the sleeper - and yet what would they not give to have Lenin in their midst again! One old woman, all unconscious of the irony of her action, crossed herself as she gazed with adoration at the face which looked as fresh as if Lenin has only just gone to sleep, and his words flashed through my mind - "Religion is the opium of the people!"

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