

By George McManus

BRINGING UP FATHER



Charlie Bunting, Prospector of Stewart, Still Confident His Ideals Will Eventuate

(An Interview by Newton Pullen)

That one of the men who staked the claims where the Premier Mine, the wonder of the mining world today is located, should have been a Marxian Socialist who had gone north with the avowed intention of doing as little as he could for the capitalist and who favors the abolition of silver and gold monetary standards is an astonishing fact yet a true one.

Charles Bunting, well known for his radical tendencies and blacklisted from the metaliferous camps of southern British Columbia for his labor activities, went to Stewart during the boom of some ten years ago, and staked with his two partners, the claims upon which the Premier mine is today located. Mining men claim that the property has greater potential possibilities than any silver-gold property on the continent today. Big capitalists, leaders in a system which Charlie Bunting predicts will eventually crash, are developing there and shipping large quantities of the precious metals out to be utilized under our monetary scheme which too, must perish with the structure which it built, if Charlie's hopes and forecasts come true.

In a chat at Victoria, Charlie spoke of the curious contrasts between the realities and his ideals. He talked of mining, of his past career, of socialism and of religion. He spoke intensely, aggressively.

Keeping to the subject of mining with Charlie was no easy task. It was not long before he got away on his favorite topic of Socialism, expressing himself as scornful of other creeds than Marx. From time to time he could be enticed back to mining and it was in the linking up of these two subjects, socialism and mining, that place him in a particularly interesting light.

Was Federal Candidate.

The subject of this sketch entered the Boundary country of this Province back about 1904. There he became connected with the Western Federation of Miners, rising eventually to the presidency of the district. He was very radical in his leanings, more so than the leaders of the organization with which he was connected and at one time was in a position to practically dictate to the mine operators. During his stay in the Boundary country Charlie was prevailed upon to stand as socialist candidate for the Federal legislature, running against Martin Burrell, the Conservative, and Duncan Ross, the Liberal. He had no success however.

When times got bad the mine owners had their innings, and together with a large number of other "Reds," Charlie Bunting was blacklisted. At this time the boom was just starting at Stewart, at the head of the Portland Canal. "Going north to that place with no clear idea of what he intended to do, Charlie was at least confined of this fact—that he would do as little as possible for the capitalist class which had forced him out of the metaliferous camps of the south. He had up to that time worked at various branches of mining and metallurgy and was therefore well posted.

Finally he, his brother William and "Scotty" Dilworth, went prospecting together. The three men went up the Salmon River Valley and there Bill and Scotty staked out a number of claims, that have become great in the history of mining. They found outcroppings, yes, but nothing to bring hopes of anything equal to what has been found. While Charlie did not actually stake the claims on which the mine is he became one of the

owners and took part in the staking of adjacent claims. In the evenings round the campfire the men would talk together in the silence of the mountains of what the Valley might someday be. Today the Premier Mine is said by mining men to have greater potentialities than any other similar property on the American continent. It has already broken all records for results from the development done. This has been paid for by the ore shipped down to tidewater over a sleighroad during the past three winters.

History of Mine.

The Premier, the claims for which were staked in 1910, was first worked by a B.C. stock company in the following year. The development was confined at that time to the galena showings, with fair results. Then W. A. Rolph, representing a Canadian mining company, examined the property and put men to work. A high grade vein was traced for some hundred feet, and it was open cut along its length, high grade ore being found in each cut. At the beginning of the war the work was dropped, and the property was next bonded by a New York company. This concern spent nearly \$100,000 in nearly two years on the property, but the direction of the ore bodies was misjudged, and, getting little results, the company quit. R. K. Neil, of Spokane, bonded the property in 1916 and set to work there the next year. He did not make the mistakes of his predecessor who was found to have been within a few feet of ore at practically every point. In 1919 the Guggenheim interests took over the mine and have been developing it ever since. The possibilities look better all the time.

Prospector's Urge.

The Premier has created a furor in the mining world. Charlie Bunting has followed with interest its development, but he was only a prospector, and so to him goes no part of the fame which the mine has attained. "You ask me," he said "what is the motive that spurs a prospector on to stave as he does. It is not all a mere striving after money. There is something else, that something else that makes me believe

that in spite of what people say all incentive will not be removed under socialism. There is the pleasure of discovery. The prospector stakes all he has, works hard for long periods without success and when he makes a find he gets only a poor monetary reward."

When he went north to Stewart Charlie had sworn that he would create "as little surplus value as possible" for the capitalist, as he expressed it in Marxian terms. Today the capitalists are shipping out the precious metals much of which will be used to back our financial system. What are Charlie's views? He believes that the day is coming when the present system will collapse, when money as we know it will no longer exist. The gold and silver monetary basis will be abolished, that of labor-time taking its place, and the precious metals will have to be utilized solely for other purposes.

Without Bitterness.

Charlie Bunting is without bitterness. He realizes that he must bend now to the system. He points out that the Guggenheims, and the Rockefeller are merely creatures of circumstances just as he is. But though travelling in the groove of the times he talks of a new era, talks with an aggressive certainty of revolution. Charlie does not hate the capitalists. He claims that the era of the present system was an essential one in world progress, but he predicts its collapse in the onward march toward better things. Charlie Bunting cites Russia continually. He looks with suspicion upon the capitalist press, gaining his information from other sources.

"There is only one socialism," that of Marx," declares the miner. He claims that the man who understands Marx is fitted with a powerful weapon in so much as he can apply the knowledge to forecasting future events. All great movements have an economic basis, he says, and these are definite, known laws are adhered to. He sees no hope in co-operative management, profit sharing, and legislation for the benefit of workers. A revolution is inevitable, he declares.

Touching briefly upon religion, Charlie Bunting says that Marxians are usually agnostics. They believe in the laws of evolution. About the beginning of things they admit they know nothing.

A Labor of Love.

"There are people who claim," says Charlie Bunting, "that men go into the labor movement for what they can get out of it. I can tell you I never made anything from my labor activities, and I have never found a more altruistic set of men than in labor circles. I finally got blacklisted, but I am not sorry for the stand I took, for it is only by the working men sacrificing something that they will be enabled to move up."

When Charlie came to this country he knew nothing of Socialism, but since the days of his youth, he had rebelled against established orders and even then had refused to accept the religious teachings of his time. Going to the Boundary Country of British Columbia, he still knew nothing of Socialism, but when he cast his first ballot in Canada he voted for the Socialist candidate. He was working on smelter furnaces at the time, and on the day of elec-

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A workman with him asked him how he was going to vote. He replied that the Socialist would get his support and he argued in defense of his stand in this wise that the old parties had had their opportunities and had not done for the workingman what Charlie believed they should have done. He would give the Socialist a chance. The candidate was at least a workingman himself and would see affairs through the workingman's eyes. Since that time Charlie has acquired his knowledge of Marx, and has uncompromisingly waged his battle against the existing order.

Asked how he would operate the mining industry under his form of socialism, Charlie Bunting replied that he could not say, as such matters would have to be worked out when the time came. A man would be a fool.

(Continued on Page 6,7)

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