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SOCIALISM

BY WILLIAM SCHOLL McCLURE

**A Paper Read
Before the
Albany Press Club
"SOCIALIST NIGHT"**

**Published by the
NEW YORK LABOR NEWS
COMPANY
28 CITY HALL PLACE
New York City**

1911



**PRICE
FIVE
CENTS**

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"And they shall build houses and inhabit them: and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat."—ISAIAH, LXV, 21, 22.

New York:
NEW YORK LABOR NEWS COMPANY

1900

INTRODUCTORY.

It was with great pleasure, I am free to confess, that I received your invitation to explain here the nature and purpose of the socialist movement. Aside from the workers, who have been forced by their condition to consideration of the social problem, I know of no body of men with whom I would rather discuss this subject. Composed as is this club mainly of brain workers, men who have been brought together by an affinity of intellectual interests, and who by their occupations are continually brought in contact with a wide range of ideas, here, if anywhere, it would seem one might be met half way; that with the truth for our aim, rather than the cheap glory of the disputatious debater, the question might be considered dispassionately and on its merits.

I cannot but wish, however, you had found available some one more competent to do justice to the cause I have so much at heart. I am but a raw recruit in the movement, and am conscious of influences from my surroundings and prejudices not wholly uprooted that at times too strongly color my point of view. Indeed, until we make the effort to free ourselves from it, we are seldom aware of the subtle yet powerful influence exerted upon the mind by the mental atmosphere in which one lives.

The fundamental principles of socialism are comparatively simple; but the subject in its historic, economic, and ethical aspects is such a vast one that the little time I have been able to give to its study has hardly fitted me to be its

expounder. I must ask your indulgence, therefore, for any shortcomings, and beg you to remember the impossibility of treating adequately in a short essay a proposition which touches so vitally every phase of our social life.

It is not the expectation of effecting miraculous conversions to socialism that emboldens me to-night, but a strong hope that you may be sufficiently interested to give the subject the impartial study and careful investigation it should have, and without which any attempt to pass judgment upon its merits serves but to display the prejudices of the critic. While, therefore, I am convinced that socialism would make possible a truer and manlier life for every one of us, I shall make no attempt to dazzle with roseate visions of an earthly heaven; but shall endeavor, rather, to make clear the nature and significance of the movement, giving more particular attention to those points which the Press most frequently misrepresents, or at least misconceives. For I am well assured that to comprehend rightly is but one step from working with us.

SOCIALISM.

To the student of psychology, the attitude of mind in which the average man meets a new idea is most striking. There would seem to be a common laziness of mental habitude, which then betrays itself in a sort of resentful irritation, like that of one aroused unwillingly from sleep. The mind moves along smoothly only so long as it is in the customary grooves; and shrinks, perhaps unconsciously, from real thought, the effort to get in touch with new ideas—it being so much easier to acquiesce in things as they are. As said John Locke, most men “are content to go with the crowd, and so go easily, which they think is going right, or at least serves them as well.”

To the significance of every-day events, it would seem as if the mind were numbed or deadened by the very fact of their frequent occurrence. We see them—and yet fail to realize them. And as many are made fully conscious of the power of life and the beauty of its surroundings only by the thrilling touch of the artist, so, too, most of us seem insensible to the common barbarities and injustice of the social condition, until the searching pen of the philanthropist or the burning words of the agitator rouse the conscience in revolt against them.

A rational thinker, when confronted by a new idea contradicting that which he has been accustomed to accept, will realize that it must be based either on facts which he has overlooked, or of which he may be ignorant, or on a process of reasoning with which he is unfamiliar. Until, therefore, he has examined thoroughly, if he is an honest thinker, he will hold his judgment in abeyance. The judicial temperament, however, is rare. Egotism and prejudice never stop to examine fairly the opposite point of view, but assume, rather, that there is none, and pass judgment offhand.]

Yet one would suppose that the socialist theory, advanced solely for the avowed purpose of securing justice for the poor and a general betterment of our condition, would command impartial consideration at least, in order that society might avail itself of whatever good there might be in it. Quite otherwise. It has met the common fate of all disturbers of the mental repose. At the mere mention of it, people bridle up as if threatened with personal injury, and—scarce one stopping to examine—denounce it voluminously and vociferously. Ignorance has appealed to ignorance, and prejudice to prejudice. Misrepresentation, ridicule and abuse have been heaped upon it; while so often have its advocates met with persecution and oppression that already its history furnishes abundant material for a "Book of Martyrs" newly writ.

There is perhaps no statement more persistently reiterated and commonly believed than that the laborers are to-day vastly better off than they ever have been before. And from this the inference is drawn that they really have no just cause for complaint, but are actually getting their fair share of the increased productivity which has resulted from the development of machinery. Socialists might admit all this, and yet, on the grounds of expediency and morality, find sufficient cause for seeking a change in the present system. But statement and inference are so plainly contradicted by the facts—facts, however, of which most people seem unaware—that the point will repay consideration.

The three charts¹ which we have here are based mainly on the careful researches of Thorold Rogers. Chart One traces the wage condition of the English agricultural laborer, and Chart Two of the carpenter, in proportion to the cost of living for a family of five persons, from 1260 to 1887. These may be taken as fairly representative of the two classes of labor, skilled and unskilled. Chart Three shows the general trend of the length of the working day in England during the same period.

Here, in graphic outline, is a record of the aspirations, struggles, victories and defeats, not of kings and lords, the

¹These may be found in "Six Centuries of Work and Wages: A History of English Labor." By James E. Thorold Rogers. Abridged, with Charts and Appendix. New York: New York Labor News Company.

heroes of history, but of the great mass of the English people. There is something almost tragic in the curves of these successive peaks and valleys. Note particularly this seeming mountain range—the long, laborious ascent, with its many ups and downs, ending in a precipice, sharp and terrible. This, the fifteenth century, where the peaks are highest, has been well named the “Golden Age of Labor”—so large a share of the values he produced was the worker able to keep to himself. The purchasing power of the wage in the fifteenth century for these two classes of labor ranges from two dollars nearly to four (the average probably being close to three dollars), *for a workday of about eight hours*, as is shown by Chart Three. (Perhaps this will give you an insight to the present demand for an eight-hour workday. The workers are seeking simply to get back what they once had. And yet they are told the world to-day cannot afford to grant it.)

Here, then, were mere handicraftsmen, working short hours, yet receiving a wage that ensured them material comfort, and able also to maintain a king and his nobility, and an extensive monastic establishment.

Now, it is a conservative estimate that machinery and scientific progress have increased the productivity of labor at least twelve times. Yet the United States census of 1880 showed an average wage for the workers of only about one dollar a day. To sum up, then:—*productivity increased at least twelve times, hours of labor longer and wages about one-third*. In the face of such facts, how is it possible to deny that the workers are being robbed?

The methods by which the English laborer was reduced from the prosperity of the fifteenth century you will find in Rogers' *Work and Wages*. So consciously villainous were they that he characterizes them as “a conspiracy, concocted by the law and carried out by parties interested in its success, . . . to cheat the English workman of his wages, . . . to deprive him of hope, and to degrade him into irremediable poverty.”

Now consider for a moment another period, which on the chart appears a veritable valley of death. It is the beginning of the present century, when the working class was in the lowest depths of wage slavery. Wages fell below the point of

subsistence for a family, and the hours of labor were lengthened to the limit of human endurance. The degradation and suffering to which the workers were reduced seems almost incredible. On the other hand, capitalistic wealth was being accumulated with a rapidity hitherto unparalleled. "It was not five per cent., or ten per cent., but thousands per cent.," we are told.

I call particular attention to this period, because it is the one usually referred to when comparisons are made to show how the condition of the workers has improved. You see it simplifies matters vastly for the critic of socialism to assume that history began with the nineteenth century. And it gives an apparent plausibility to the further assumption that the improvement which this century shows, is proof positive that the workers have shared in the benefits of machine production. And to this alone is the improvement commonly attributed, though in all probability it has been the least instead of the greatest factor, if a factor at all. To determine the truth of this claim, that the workers have been benefited by the introduction of machinery, it is obvious that comparison must be made, not between different periods of machine production, but with the age of handicraft. And the weakness of the claim is at once apparent when it is seen that the handicraftsmen, before the conspiracy, were better off than the workers to-day.

EFFECT OF INVENTION ON THE WORKING CLASS.

Closer examination of the facts brings this out even more clearly. Note this sinister downward curve, beginning about the middle of the eighteenth century, and the significance of the facts which stand alongside it—1765, Watt's steam engine; 1768, the spinning machines; 1775 Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. In short, the period during which the old trade restrictions were being removed and machinery was being rapidly introduced, is one of marked deterioration in the condition of the workers. Then the capitalistic "*laissez faire*" was in full swing, consequently, *we here have a clear test of the natural effect upon the workers of the introduction of machinery in a capitalist society*. The degradation and slavery into which they sank make this one of the blackest pages in the history of England. Little wonder then that they smashed

the machines, ignorant as yet that it was not the machine, but its ownership by the capitalist, that was the cause of their enslavement!

How, then, was this baleful influence counteracted? To what is the improvement which has since taken place to be attributed?

The first check was factory legislation. Inaugurated in 1802, it began to be effective about 1817. Step by step the power of the capitalist exploiters to subject the workers to degrading conditions has been limited by law. So far as the workers are concerned this sort of legislation is but a temporary expedient to make our present system tolerable so long as it must last; and to-day, as you know, their efforts in this direction are being concentrated on the demand for a legally established eight-hour workday.

But even more potent than factory and kindred legislation was the law passed in 1824 granting the workers the right of combination. The influence of this factor, however, has been confined almost wholly to the skilled workers. This the contrast shown by the charts between the rapid progress of the carpenter and the slow and meager improvement of the agricultural laborer clearly indicates. They have been able through combination (or that which you of the Press solicitously pretend to deprecate as the tyranny of trade-unionism), to bring about a partial monopoly in their various trades, thus gaining the power at times to wrest material concessions from their employers and effect a marked improvement in their condition. But for the unskilled laborers, forced into competition with that mass of the unemployed which is continually recruited through fluctuations of trade and the displacements which accompany the introduction of machinery, for these workers successful combination on the lines of trade-unionism has been impossible. And as a consequence we find this class everywhere still sunk in poverty most hopeless and abject.¹

It would seem as if the workers' condition had improved, not because, but in spite, of machinery. And it was this fact

¹The skilled workers, too, those who have formed the great bulk of the trade-unions, have found themselves unable to resist organized and militant capitalism. No better illustration of this could be found than the recent strikes of the Machinists and the Steel Workers. These two branches have for years maintained fairly large organizations. They have been looked upon as the backbone of the

which led John Stuart Mill to declare that "it is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day's toil of any human being."¹ Why this is so will be considered further on. Enough for the present that herein is the gist of the socialist indictment of the capitalist system from the historical standpoint. Its manifest failure, with the vastly increased powers of production which it controls, to affect any proportionate improvement in the condition of the workers is clear evidence that something is out of joint.

PERMANENT ARMY OF THE UNEMPLOYED.

The present organization of society has many other anomalous and portentous features. Who has not been struck by the peculiar problem of a permanent class of the unemployed? In this country they are numbered by hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions. Those in power have never dared to collect accurate statistics on this point (though the census laws have called for it), except perhaps once in Massachusetts, and then the result was so startling that it was never tried again. For most workers there is constant uncertainty of employment; periods of enforced idleness being frequent, and steady work exceptional. There is a sense of insecurity, of ever present fear for the future, that makes a dog's life of it at the best.

Is there not something amazing about such a state of affairs? It is admitted that every able-bodied man is capable of producing, by his work, value equivalent to subsistence, at least. No one pretends that the resources of this country are exhausted, or have been outrun by population. Nor does any one claim that there is such an abundance for all that it is unnecessary for these men to work. For we know well enough that, under present conditions, *no matter how much he has produced*, stoppage of work to the worker means starvation. It is also perfectly clear that every waste of labor-power involves a corresponding decrease in the sum total of our national production and wealth. And finally, right in this body of the

American Federation of Labor. Yet the Machinists' strike was a failure, except in a few scattered places: while the Steel Workers won nothing, and in most instances lost what they already had.—Note by the Editor.

¹"Mill should have said, 'of any human being not fed by other people's labor,' for, without doubt, machinery has greatly increased the number of well-to-do idlers."—Karl Marx, "Capital," p. 365.

unemployed, are men of every occupation, fully capable of supplying each others needs, and willing, if only given the chance. Why, then, must any be idle? Why is this labor-power wasted? Why cannot these men get an opportunity to work? Is not the system which results in such involuntary idleness, and can find no remedy other than a debasing charity, condemned by such a fact alone?

INCREASING EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

Alongside this fact of the enforced idleness of the men, consider the growing employment in our industries of women and even children in their places. It is not for us to point the finger of scorn at the savage because he makes the squaws do the work! The census reports show that this evil is growing steadily. And as a direct result of it, a danger is arising that threatens the very life of our institutions, dependent as they are for their success upon the intelligence of the people. The children are being kept out of the schools. It is estimated that in New York city alone nearly 100,000 children of school age are not in the schools. Furthermore, the last census has shown that in many sections of the country the school enrollment is not increasing in proportion to the population; *the disproportion being most marked in the great manufacturing states of the East.* New York state, for instance, with an increase of 18 per cent. in population, shows a gain of but 1 38-100 per cent. in school enrollment. In Pennsylvania, population increased 22 77-100 per cent., but school enrollment only 1 59-100 per cent.¹

Now, is not that system twice condemned, which not only forces idleness upon the men, but takes women from their homes and children from the schools to displace them, throwing the burden of the world's work upon those least able to bear it?

OVERPRODUCTION—STARVATION IN MIDST OF PLENTY.

Consider, for a moment, one other anomaly—perhaps the most striking of them all. With the concentration and organi-

¹The school enrollment may increase, but it is not the intention of the dominant class that all children able to attend school shall be given an opportunity to do so. The opening of each school year in New York City shows this. The city government refuses to raise money to build and equip school houses, and at the same time uses a vast sum to take advantage of the money Carnegie offered for libraries. When the school year for 1901 opened, nearly fifteen thou-

zation of industries in the form of the pool or trust, it is frequently found that if the means of production at hand are fully utilized, the supply will be in excess, not, mark you, of the real needs of the people, but of the commercial demand. Then comes the first step in a vicious circle. Either a general curtailment of production is resorted to, or some of the factories are closed; which but increases the mass of the unemployed, of those suffering from the lack of the very things, possibly, which these factories might produce, and willing to work to get them. *Means of production ample, men in plenty—and both idle!* How is it possible to defend the system which forces us into such an absurd dead-lock—one so terrible in its consequences; which restricts production, and even creates artificial famines for speculative purposes, while millions are getting barely enough to keep them alive, and millions more are so little removed from destitution that a few weeks' idleness would reduce them to pauperism?

And take it in the unregulated fields of production, where competition is still a force. Here things drift helplessly round, periods of activity and periods of depression and panic following one another with a certainty that can almost be predicted. All for a time seems going well, when suddenly we are confronted by that preposterous bugaboo of *over-production*, that riddle which capitalism has never solved. For the shut-down to which it resorts is neither more nor less than a confession of absolute incompetency, and but intensifies the evil by destroying what little purchasing power the workers may have. And with what result! Enforced idleness and consequent privation and suffering on the one hand, and storehouses filled to overflowing on the other. *The workers reduced to beggary, not because they have exhausted the resources of nature, but because they have produced too much!* Were it not so tragic in its results, such an exhibition of topsy-turvy-dom might seem a fit subject for the farcical pen of the author of *Negative Gravity*. It is the *reductio ad absurdum* of capitalist production. And yet we are told it is the exhausting brain-work and

and school children could find no place in the schools, and of these over six thousand came from the poorest section of the city, the poverty-stricken East Side. Refusing to teach children to read and write and then building libraries for them when they get to be men and women (which libraries they can never make use of) is characteristic of blind, anarchistic capitalism.—Note by the Editor.

the far-seeing sagacity of the capitalist which entitle him to filch from the workers such a disproportionate share of the product! Verily, "The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out."

These anomalies might be multiplied indefinitely. They are patent on every side to anyone who looks beneath the surface of events. Not merely normal features, they can be shown to result inevitably from the present constitution of society. When, therefore, the upholders of such a travesty of common sense throw stones at the socialists, calling them discontented cranks and visionaries incapable of logical thought, it is at times difficult to decide whether to be most indignant or amused.

CHANGE IN SOCIALIST THOUGHT.

Few seem to be aware of the change in the character of socialist thought that has taken place during the last fifty years. And, consequently, the average critic is usually wide of the mark; continuing to attribute to modern socialism all the crudities of its earlier forms, or judging it wholly by the extravagancies of persons who misunderstand both its character and its objects. He is apparently unable to distinguish clearly the essence from the form, the underlying idea from that which is purely incidental to the conditions under which it takes shape.

The nature of the change has been well defined as a development from the static to the dynamic. The socialism proposed by such men as Owen and Fourier was of a Utopian cast, and was characteristic of the methods of thought in vogue before the diffusion of evolutionary ideas. There was little or no recognition of the action of economic forces in the shaping of the social life, or perception of the correlations of historical events. Socialism, therefore, was not conceived of as something to be attained only by a conscious guidance and development of social tendencies. It was a sort of ready-made scheme, all planned out in detail, that, it was supposed, might be put in operation most anywhere, irrespective of existing conditions. Little experimental heavens were to be established, in which a few choice spirits gathering together would demonstrate its advantages, and thereby confute a doubting world. The scheme was usually that of some middle-class philanthropist,

anxious for the regeneration of society; and lacked that vitality which can come only from a conscious movement of the oppressed.

This phase of socialism still survives to some extent, and experimental colonies are attempted now and again. The scientific socialist is not inclined to regard them with favor, when founded with the idea of proving the practicability of socialism. To him they indicate an imperfect conception of the problem involved, and therefore are misleading and inconclusive in their results. Not only do they call for even greater administrative and financial ability than most any ordinary business undertaking, but they demand certain qualities of human nature of necessity rare in a society which makes self-interest so abnormally a motive of action. Consequently, success is almost impossible, and the significance of failure is sure to be overrated by those who do not perceive how little they prove either one way or the other. Had socialism never progressed beyond this stage, I am free to confess that I should probably still be in the ranks of the unbelievers; or even if acknowledging the worthiness of the ideal, would have been sceptical as to its practicability.

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIALISM FROM UTOPIA TO SCIENCE.

To German scholars is largely due the development of socialism from the Utopian stage to the scientific. A fact that is often taken advantage of to prejudice Americans against it by shallow appeals to racial instinct. Modern socialism, though of German origin, like all truly scientific thought is not measured by national lines. Universality is its distinguishing feature. Prof. R. T. Ely, in *French and German Socialism*, states that "The German socialists are distinguished by the profundity of their systems. These are not exhausted by a few hours' study. You can come back to them time and time again, and obtain ever new ideas. A great German economist (Schäffle) declares that it took him years to comprehend the full significance of German socialism." (Those who think that in reading *Looking Backward* they have mastered the Alpha and Omega of socialism would do well to note this.) "It gives no evidence," continues Prof. Ely, "of decreasing power, but, on the contrary, its influence is manifestly spreading and becoming more and more deeply rooted in the minds and hearts of

large masses. Its vitality is due, on the one hand, to the logical and philosophical strength of the systems on which it is based; on the other, to the patience and indomitable perseverance of its leaders.

"One of its leading characteristics is its thoroughly scientific spirit. Sentimentalism is banished, and a foundation sought in hard, relentless laws, resulting necessarily from the physiological, psychological, and social constitution of man, and his physical environment. . . . Coldly, passionlessly, laws regulating wages and value are developed, which show that in our present economic society the poverty of laborers and their robbery by capitalists are as inevitable facts as the motions of the planets. Histories, blue books, and statistical journals are searched, and facts are piled on facts, mountain-high, to sustain every separate and individual proposition. Mathematical demonstrations as logical as problems in Euclid take the place of fine periods, perorations, and appeals to the Deity. Political economy is not rejected, but in its strictest and most orthodox form becomes the very corner-stone of the new social structure. . . . English political economy is developed to its logical and consistent conclusion with wonderful learning and skill."

These are not the words of a socialist, and cannot, on that account, be accused of partiality. It is the testimony of a cautious and independent thinker.

To the exhaustive research of the Germans we owe that clear grasp of historic tendencies and economic forces which fills the socialist with confidence and hope. For these unconscious forces are seen to make for that towards which he consciously strives. Socialism, in their hands, is no longer a Utopian scheme, out of all relation to the facts of life, but a logical consummation of the tendencies which they reveal. It is an attempt, through an evolutionary treatment of the forces at work in the body social, to make the working class conscious of the part it is destined to play in the industrial development of the future.

Modern socialism is the application to economics of the scientific method, and the progress achieved has been no less marked than in the fields of science, philosophy, and historical criticism. Tracing the history of the class struggle through

the earlier forms of chattel slavery and serfdom to the development of modern wage slavery, it demonstrates the exploitation of the workers to be the common basis of them all. So long, therefore, as exploitation exists in any form, we will have slavery and the warfare of classes. And socialists seek to make the workers conscious of this antagonism only that they may put an end to it. For in a society so reorganized that remuneration would be determined by the social value of the work performed, there could be but one class—the class of useful workers; and but one interest—the interest of the working class. “If any will not work, neither let him eat.”

It shows, also, how largely the political and social life of each epoch is determined by the economic basis upon which it rests; thereby justifying its assertion that through economic justice alone can society be regenerated, and the struggle of classes be made to cease.

THE CLASS STRUGGLE.

A word here in explanation of the socialist doctrine of class antagonism, concerning which there is considerable misapprehension. We are frequently admonished that there are no classes in this country. (Would there were none!) That, in theory at least, we all have the same political rights; all are equal before the law. That the class doctrine applies in Europe, perhaps, where men are still divided into classes by the survivals of feudalism, but not here. This shows a complete misconception of the sense in which the term is used. It is used to distinguish, not a social, but an economic condition. And when the papers refer to some proposed labor law as *class* legislation, they use the word in the same sense precisely. By class antagonism, therefore, is meant that opposition of the economic interests which results from capitalist exploitation, and is as characteristic of America as of Europe. For, as you are well aware, the commercial systems of the two continents are identical. Socialism is essentially an economic, rather than a social or political proposition. Its aim everywhere is to prevent that robbery of the workers which is an inevitable part of capitalist production, whether it be in autocratic Russia or Republican America. It is this that gives the movement its international character—and to aver that there is no

basis for its existence in the United States shows an utter failure to comprehend the scope of its attack.

To understand socialism rightly, a clear comprehension of the nature of and reason for its criticism of property rights is most necessary.

GENESIS OF CAPITALIST PROPERTY.

Capitalism, as it exists to-day, is of comparatively recent date. In the middle ages the workers were, as a rule, in possession individually of the means of production—the land and the tools. Each family, to a great extent, supplied its own needs; or exchange was largely within the limits of the community, a matter of mutual services. Here, then, is a simple and true form of private property. It is self-earned. There is individual ownership of the means of production, individual production, and individual appropriation of the product. But, as a productive system, it was necessarily meager in its results.

As the advantages of combined effort, with division of labor, or co-operative production, came to be appreciated, the older form began gradually to be superseded. But when this division of labor, by reducing production to a series of simple operations, opened the way for mechanical invention, a rapid transformation followed and modern capitalism was soon in full sway. The change that had taken place was most radical. With the organization of production on an ever-increasing scale, the worker had been expropriated—no longer owned the means of production. (This term, “means of production,” in common usage, includes such property only as enters into production or transportation—land, mines, factories, machinery, warehouses, railroads, etc.; commercial property, as distinguished from private property, or that which goes to the supplying of one’s individual needs.) The means of production had passed from the hands of the workers to the capitalists. And as a result of the change, things now stand in this wise:—socialized production, but capitalist ownership of the means of production, and capitalist appropriation of the product. *The owner of the means of production, though no longer the producer, still appropriates the product; and the character of the appropriation is fundamentally changed.*

This is the genesis of capitalist private property. *Once the result of one’s individual efforts, under capitalism property*

has largely become the appropriation of that which is produced by the labor of others. It is the robbery of the workers. Can you wonder, then, that when men talk glibly of the sacred rights of property, *meaning capitalist property*, the socialist, knowing whence it is derived, refuses to bow down and worship. "Property is theft," said Proudhon. And surely, private property in the means of production is not only theft, but the means of more theft.

Let me restate the nature of this change, as a clear understanding of it is most vital.

Formerly the worker owned the means of production, used them himself, and owned the product. Now we have capitalist ownership of the means of production; and capitalist appropriation of that which is produced by the socialized or co-operative efforts of the workers. Property, once self-earned, now rests on the exploitation of the workers. *And ownership of the means of production is the key to the situation; for to the owner goes the product.* Thereby comes the power to rob; for to gain access to them the workers must forego their right to that which they produce.

LABOR-POWER BECOMES A COMMODITY.

The effect of this change upon the condition of the workers has been most marked. Through loss of control over the means of production, the once independent handicraftsmen have become the wage-slaves of to-day. They work, not for themselves, but for a master, to whom goes the product of their labor, except a portion barely sufficient to keep them in working condition. Sometimes, not even that. Their labor-power—and you cannot separate the labor-power from the man—they are forced to offer as a market commodity. They must sell or perish, having no other resource; and they sell themselves by the day, the week, the year. The wage they receive bears little or no relation to the productive value of the labor. The competition of the labor market determines it. If in possession of a skill that is rare, the wage is high—from lack of competition. Or, if, through organization of the trade, competition for work can be prevented, a wage above the average may be enforced. Where artificial conditions do not exist, and to-day they exist only at exceptional times, and in exceptional localities, the wage-worker feels the full and disastrous

effects of being a commodity. He must sell his labor-power at its value—that is, he must sell it at its cost of production. With the mass of unemployed living on a low standard, the tendency of wages is to gravitate to that standard. The state of the labor market governs wages. To-day wages tend downward, and the standard of living goes down accordingly.

From this it can be readily seen why the workers do not share in the benefits of machinery. What they receive is determined, not by what they produce, but by competition with their fellows for a chance to work. And the displacements of labor which accompany the introduction of machinery serve but to intensify that competition by constantly recruiting the ranks of the unemployed. Furthermore, the tendency of mechanical invention to supersede skilled labor by unskilled is to the workers a positive detriment, for it means a lowering of the wage.

Consider, for instance, the probable effect upon the workers of a general introduction of the new type-setting machines. Most likely it will to very many result in loss of employment, with all the suffering that it involves. Clearly they gain nothing. No more do those who hold their positions. They will have to work just as long as ever, and will not get one cent more pay. They may even find themselves worse off than before. For, if their union should be swamped by the change, which is very possible, they will be forced to accept a competitive wage. Or if the machines are easily run, they are liable to be displaced by the more cheaply paid labor of women.

This, then, is how it stands. On the one hand, workers who must get access to the means of production or starve; and access possible only through acceptance of a competitive wage. On the other, capitalist owners of the means of production forced by competition among themselves to buy the labor offered at the lowest market price. So long, therefore, as this system remains unchanged, the robbery of the workers is its inevitable result. Production might be increased to any extent with no advantage to them whatever! Who, then, are benefited? Plainly those who own and monopolize the means of production—the capitalist class.

This is the evil that must be met: that monopoly by a class of the means of production, whereby the workers are robbed of

all but mere subsistence. And the solution which socialism proposes is a simple and logical deduction from the conditions. It was clearly formulated years ago by an American, Thomas Skidmore. In a book entitled *The Rights of Man to Property*, published in New York in 1829, he says: "If, then, it is seen that the steam engine, for example, is likely to greatly impoverish or destroy the poor, what have they do to but to lay hold of it and make it their own? Let them appropriate also, in the same way, the cotton factories, the woolen factories, the iron foundries, the rolling mills, houses, churches, ships, goods, steamboats, fields of agriculture, etc., etc., in manner as proposed in this work, and as is their right."

It is control of the means of production that makes men masters of their fellows. Formerly there was chattel slavery, mastery through ownership of the man. Now there is wage slavery, mastery through ownership of the means whereby alone the man can live. *The workers, therefore, can accomplish their emancipation only by once more becoming owners of the means of production.* But subdivision of labor and the vastly increased scale of production have made impossible individual ownership, such as existed in the age of handicrafts. How then can the divorce of the worker from the tools be ended? The change that has taken place in the nature of production gives the clue. Production has been socialized. It is no longer individual, but co-operative. Means of production, therefore, already used in common, must also be socialized—made the common property of those who use them; *free access rendering individual ownership unnecessary.* And finally exchange must be socialized—reorganized on a co-operative basis with the total elimination of profit.

The State, in so far as it is our common representative, is the natural channel through which this change can be effected. Socialists, therefore, everywhere strive to organize the workers for political action in their own behalf; are ever insistent on the intimate connection between political and social life. They encourage no hope in legislatures controlled by the money power; or in the professional politician, who never considers a public demand until it threatens his position. Said Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto* of 1848:

"The first step in the revolution by the working class is to

raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, *i. e.*, of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible."

DESTRUCTIVE TENDENCY OF CAPITALISM.

Capitalism is self-destructive; and, what is most striking, is itself laying the foundation of the future state—preparing the way for the socialist revolution. Its first act was the expropriation of the workers from the means production, the transformation of individual property into capitalist property. The next stage, in the midst of which we now are, is the expropriation of the small capitalist by the large, and the concentration of capital, through the play and pressure of competition, into ever larger masses. Competition tends irresistibly to combination and monopoly, which in productive industries are now taking the form of the trust; in distribution, of the bazaar store. The unmistakably greater efficiency of massed capital and business organization on a large scale, will sooner or later render the position of the small producer and the small distributor untenable. They have as little chance in the struggle with these improved forms of commercial organization as the handicraftsmen had with the machines. Competition, whose regulative action is so vital to our present system, so largely adduced in its justification, competition is eliminating itself. The organization of industry, though remaining capitalistic in spirit, tends more and more to the co-operative form.

In another direction the development is even more distinctly socialist in form. A strong tendency is manifest towards state or municipal control of many industries. The first step in state regulation, which is in itself an admission of the principle of state interference—the right of the people to control. From partial regulation to absolute ownership by the people is a question of policy, of degree, rather than of principle. State ownership of railroads, telegraph and telephone, state insurance and banking, municipal ownership of water-works, electric light, gas works, street railways, etc., all of these have been tried and proven most feasible. The statistics

as to their advantages are incontrovertible, but because of their capitalist management the advantages are all on the side of the capitalist class.

GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP IS NOT SOCIALISM.

This marked tendency in the direction of public control of such industries, is so seemingly socialist as to be sometimes mistaken for it. Yet, strange as it may seem, this movement, so far, is little more than a development of capitalism. The industries thus partially socialized are mostly such as are easily monopolized, and tend to exorbitance. They are by nature also parasitical—that is, they exist at the expense of the more distinctly productive industries. And the capital invested in productive industry seeks their transfer to the state, either to secure relief from a burden that has become oppressive, or to provide an independent source of revenue, to meet the growing needs of state or municipality. Either the interest of one set of capitalists are sacrificed for the benefit of the rest, or the state itself is made the exploiter. But, in any event, every step in this direction—in the substitution of public in place of individual control—goes far to prove the individual capitalist superfluous.

Now, while these constructive tendencies of capitalism are developing the forms through which socialism can be eventually realized, its slow destructive action is equally potent in the same direction. As has just been shown, every monopoly is forcing those whose interests are threatened by it to adopt the socialist method of self-defense. And every concentration of capital into fewer hands, but increases the mass of those whose interests are opposed to the maintenance of its power, and vastly simplifies the process of its absorption by the state. As Marx has stated it, "The transformation of scattered private property, arising from individual labor, into capitalist private property, is, naturally, a process incomparably more protracted, violent and difficult, than the transformation of capitalistic private property, already practically resting on socialized production, into socialized property. In the former cases we had the expropriation of the mass of the people by a few usurpers; in the latter, we have the expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of the people."

As a summing up of this outline of the main features of

modern scientific socialism, the definitions of Kirkup and Schäffle are perhaps the clearest that have been given in a concise form of the nature and aim of the movement. According to Kirkup, "The-theory of Socialism . . . is that the present economic order, in which industry is carried on by private competing capitalists served by wage labor, must and ought to pass away; and that it will give place to the economic system, in which industry will be conducted with a collective capital and by associated labor, with a view to an equitable system of distribution."

DEFINITIONS OF SOCIALISM.

Again he explains it as "A theory of social evolution based on a new principle of economic organization, according to which industry should be carried on by co-operative workers jointly controlling the means of production."

Schäffle, after defining it in almost the same terms, goes on to state that "This collective method of production would remove the present competitive system by placing under official administration such departments of production as can be managed collectively (socially or co-operatively), as well as the distribution among all of the common produce of all, according to the amount and social utility of the productive labor of each.

. . . The productive labor of all would be associated in establishments for the purpose of production and exchange, socially managed, equipped out of collective capital, and worked by persons in receipt of salaries, not of private profits and wages." And elsewhere he states that "The Alpha and Omega of socialism is the transformation of private and competing capital into a united collective capital."

With the significance of these definitions clearly in mind, you will readily appreciate how wholly lacking in force and application is much of the current criticism of socialism; such for instance as frequently emanates from the omniscient and oracular editorial department.

SOCIALISM AND THE "DIVISION OF WEALTH."

Socialism does not propose any portioning out of the wealth of the country, share and share alike, nor does it have a vague expectation that if this were done, it would somehow or other stay divided. On no other point is misrepresentation

so frequent. Of such sort was the remark of Mr. Ingalls, which recently went the rounds of the Press, to the effect that if the wealth of the nation were equally divided, "Within six months some men would be riding in palace-cars, some in buggies, some would be on foot, and some would be sitting on the fence-corners waiting for the procession to go by." The only drawback to this brilliant epigram is that it requires for its proper appreciation ignorance equal to that of the man who made it. True enough in itself, it is wholly pointless in its intended application. *Equality of opportunity, with an equitable distribution of the product*, not necessarily equality of wealth, is the aim of socialism. It would, it is true, establish a joint and equal or common ownership of the productive capital of the nation. But it would not divide it. It is the product that would be shared, according to the value of each one's labor. That is a simple proposition that any one with business experience can understand. No firm divides its capital. It is preserved intact, and the profits only are shared.

SOCIALISM AND ITS USE OF CAPITAL.

Neither does socialism expect to get along without capital, though changing its character fundamentally. To-day capital is the *means of exploitation*; while under socialism it would lose this capitalist quality, and become simply the *means of production*. Socialism aims at the absolute concentration of capital, the realization of its greatest efficiency. Instead of blindly denouncing combinations and trusts, it points out and seeks to utilize their saving qualities. The trust is a superior form of commercial organization. It eliminates the tremendous wastes involved in competition, and demonstrates the advantages of combination and system over scattered and planless effort. The trusts have come to stay. But we must take possession of them if we would not have them for our masters.

Socialism does not preach antagonism between labor and capital, nor is it blind to the dependence of the one upon the other. It has just been shown that it would have labor profit by the use of capital to the fullest possible extent, by utilizing it in its most efficient form. What it does teach is that fundamental opposition of interests which necessarily exists between those who monopolize the capital to their own advantage, and

those who, through that monopoly, are being robbed. The antagonism is not between labor and capital, but between laborer and capitalist. We may blink our eyes and cry peace, but none the less there is war incessant.

WHAT SOCIALISM WILL DO AND WHAT IT WILL NOT DO.

Socialism would not do away with private property, except in the means of production. It questions only the abuse of property; the monopoly for the supplying of our common needs. Its purpose is not to prevent individual accumulation, but to define it by the social value of each one's labor. Whatsoever a man gets in excess of the value of his services to the community is robbery, for it is the community that supplies his needs. Socialism would hold the means of production as the common or joint property of the people, but make private property of the product, equitably divided; limiting the rights of property only so far as is necessary to secure the rights of man. Said John Stuart Mill: "Society is fully entitled to abrogate or alter any particular right of property which on sufficient consideration it judges to stand in the way of the public good. And assuredly the terrible case which . . . Socialists are able to make out against the present economic order of society demands a full consideration of all means by which the institution may have a chance of being made to work in a manner more beneficial to that large portion of society which at present enjoys the least share of its direct benefits."

Another common bugbear is paternalism. It would seem to arise from the conception of government as an autocracy, an irresponsible power outside of ourselves; a singular idea for Americans to hold. For in a democracy it is through the state that men unite to give strength to their common aims, and the government is merely the administrative organization through which the people can systematically manage their affairs. That alone is paternal which is done for us—in which the people have no voice. For example, to aver that the people cannot manage the railroads, and to leave it to a Gould and a Vanderbilt to hire somebody to run them for us—that is paternalism. The people have nothing to say. They foot the bills and submit, like the small boy, to the emptying of the pockets, fearful only lest something worse may follow. But were the people to take hold of things, and run them themselves, as the social-

ists propose, that would be not paternalism, but fraternalism—united action for the protection of our common interests.

It is frequently urged, and with some show of plausibility, that to enlarge the sphere of the state would only give greater scope to the corruption which is now such a marked feature of our legislative bodies. Such an argument indicates the failure to trace the evil to its source, or to appreciate how wholly changed the conditions would be. Corruption arises from an opposition of private to public interests. So long as there is the possibility of individuals furthering their own private interests at the expense of the public, so long will there be legislative corruption. Self-interest is confessedly the basis of our competitive system. It is accepted, apparently, with a sort of vague idea that in some way or other the sum total of individual selfishness is the common weal. The ancients were wiser. Said Cicero: "One thing ought to be aimed at by all men; that the interest of each individually, and of all collectively, should be the same; for if each should grasp at his individual interest, all human society would be dissolved."

The railroad lobby, for example, is merely an effect, of which self-interest is the direct cause. To get out of the public all they can, that is the interest of the railroads, so long as they remain the property of individuals. And the ease with which the aggressive self-interest of a few overgrown corporations is able to debauch our legislatures to further their ends, should warn us that there has grown up in our midst a power that overshadows the state itself. Under socialism, the railroads would be the common property of the nation, the same as the post-office is to-day, and the interests of all in them would be identical. There would be no railroad interest, as opposed to that of the public; and no railroad lobby, any more than there is a post-office lobby. Corruption in public affairs, such as there is to-day, would cease; for incentive and opportunity alike would no longer exist.

SOCIALISM AND GOVERNMENTAL TYRANNY.

Another argument against extending the sphere of the State is that it would result in governmental tyranny. This, too, rests on a vital misconception. The State to-day has two distinct functions:—the governmental or coercive, a relic of autocracy; and the administrative, its only true function in a

democracy. Mr. Herbert Spencer, whose notion of freedom, it would seem, does not extend beyond the exigencies of the capitalist class, would do away with the administrative function; a step by which they alone would benefit. On the other hand, he would retain the "police," or coercive function, with an eye probably to the continued subjection of the workers. Truly, an ideal freedom—for the capitalist! Socialism would enlarge, with proper safeguards, the administrative function only, and is openly hostile to the coercive. And so far as the oppressive features of the present administrative organization are concerned, they are but the reflex of our tyrannical commercial system, and can be readily remedied at any time.

Among the founders of this republic there were men of aristocratic tendencies; and others also who felt that the people were not as yet prepared for absolute democracy; that it could be realized safely only by degrees. As a result the government which they established is in the nature of a compromise. The people were not trusted, and numerous checks were devised against the prompt expression of the popular will. The men whom we elect are not truly representative. Once elected, they are our masters. They have the power, and do not hesitate to assume it. This government, however, was such a long step forward that we have stood still in complacent self-satisfaction ever since. Our institutions have not been developed proportionately to the needs that have arisen. We are behind Australia in our treatment of the railroad question; behind Austria in banking; behind Germany and England in our municipalities; behind Switzerland in democracy. Not until the man who fails to represent our views can be recalled; not until we can initiate the laws, can ratify or reject them; not until power rests with the people, will democracy be truly realized. And America as well as Europe has the battle of democracy yet to win.

SOCIALISM AND LABOR LEGISLATION.

The governmental function of the State, as distinct from the administrative, is closely bound up with our present system. So long as each works for his own immediate interests, the necessity for some check to the promptings of individual selfishness cannot be escaped. As a result of our false system of economics, merely to keep things endurable, it has become

necessary to place in the hands of government inquisitorial and obnoxious power, regulating and defining individual action in every direction. In the inevitable conflict of interests arising from a form of private property which divides the people into exploiters and exploited, in theory it is the State that holds the balance of equity. But in theory only: for unfortunately, it is the fact that in the warfare of classes those who hold or can control the political power use the government, so far as they dare, for the oppression of those whose interests are opposed to them, and for the furtherance of their own. *Labor legislation to-day is delusive and ineffectual because there is no organized labor party back of it; and to enforce it is not to the interest of the capitalist class which holds the political power.*

With the establishment, through socialism, of an identity of interests, class antagonism would cease to exist; and with it the occasion for governmental interference, or coercive power. The governmental function might be abrogated, and the power of representatives limited to administration. Thus through socialism alone can the liberty of the individual be safely realized, and to the fullest extent.

SOCIALISM AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE.

As Engels clearly states it: "By at last becoming actually the representative of the whole social body, it (*i. e.*, the State) renders itself superfluous. Soon as no longer there is any social class to be kept down; soon as, together with class rule and the individual struggle for life, founded in the previous anarchy of production, the conflicts and excesses that issued therefrom have been removed, there is nothing more to be repressed, and rendering necessary a special power of repression—the State. The first act, wherein the State appears as the real representative of the whole body social—the seizure of the means of production in the name of society—is also its last independent act as State. The interference of the State in social relations becomes superfluous in one domain after another, and falls of itself into desuetude. The place of a government over persons is taken by the administration of things and the conduct of the processes of production. The State is not 'abolished'—IT DIES OUT."

It is not the socialism that is coming, but the monopolies that are here that are destroying individual enterprise and

initiative. And the intensity of the selfish scramble in which we are all compelled to engage, gives but little scope to the natural development of one's better individuality. That man who for ten hours daily has to sacrifice the best that is in him to the exactions of commercial life, is a man of business and little else. The dull level of mediocrity, so often prophesied of socialism, is painfully apparent here and now to those who have eyes to see.

The evils from which society suffers can be almost wholly traced, either to the degradation of the masses consequent upon their wage-slavery, and the perverted class relations which result from it, or to the subversion of all moral ideals due to the irresistible force of the competitive struggle. The commercial spirit, which measures success by the bank account, besmirches wherever it touches, and sneers at all that rises above its own vain and sordid ideals. *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, once the watchwords of a great hope, are such a mockery under the present conditions as to have become mere targets for a shallow cynicism; regarded only as the mild insanity of deluded enthusiasts. Commercialism, while giving mouth praise to labor, holds the laborer a social pariah. *For the laborer to-day is a slave, and labor has become a mark of bondage.* Labor may be divine, but slavery, never. One war has been fought in this country to prove its incompatibility with republican institutions. Let care be taken lest another be necessary.

THE "DEAD LEVEL" OF SOCIALISM.

In the often expressed fear lest socialism should reduce all to the level of the workers, there is an unconscious recognition of the evil conditions they have to endure that is in itself justification of their revolt against them. Wage slavery has aspects even worse than chattel slavery. To his owner the chattel slave was valuable property that must be taken care of. But the master of the wage-slave can pay a wage on which he slowly starves, can kill with overwork, and yet lose nothing. That man who sees a hundred standing ready to take his place dares not assert himself. *The master has him in his power, and knows it;* and power is but the provocation of the bully. Many a man not alone endures conditions that are infamous, but has often to set his teeth and submit in silence to insults which, though they cut like a lash, he is powerless to resent. Masters

he can change, but a master he must serve; and not until there are none will the slave be truly free.

Nor do the wage-slaves only suffer. Commercialism taints the lives of every one of us.

EFFECTS OF COMMERCIALISM ON THE PRESS.

You of the Press have perhaps more than once been made to realize that the newspaper is to-day a business venture first of all. That for a consideration—or for business considerations, to express it more politely—it may at times be expedient to tread lightly where powerful interests are involved. If, for instance, the proprietor of the paper for which you write owns gas and electric light stock, and the question of municipal lighting is up, which gains utterance—your convictions or his pocket? Or when you color the news to suit the prejudices of those who patronize the paper for which you are preparing it, are you not sacrificing truth to the proprietor's business interests? And if you write indifferently on either side of a public question—protection editorials one year and free trade perhaps the next—according as the opportunity is to your advantage, do you justify it as being a matter of business merely? That it is exactly! You are living on the commercial level, and sell your brains to voice convictions and interests that are not your own. It is prostitution! And by so much as intellect is higher than the body, so much the deeper is your infamy.

EFFECTS OF COMMERCIALISM ON LAWYERS.

You of the Law are in much the same position. Capital, in its efforts to evade the intention of the laws, can command the shrewdest of your wits. For your brains are at the disposal of whoever can pay the price. You are indifferently attorney for the prosecution or attorney for the defense; to enforce the law, or if possible to thwart it, being equally a matter of dollars and cents. Law breaking is condemned, but to defend the law-breaker by all the arts of legal subterfuge is perfectly admissible. For your profession also is on the commercial basis. To you, too, it is a matter of business, right or wrong not entering into the question. Said Wendell Phillips of one of your proudest names: "This is Choate, who made it safe to murder, and of whose health thieves asked before they began to steal."

And did those of you who, like myself, are in the very

thick of commercialism ever realize that we are busy for the most part trying to steal trade from each other and work the traffic for all it will bear? *That, consequently, three-fourths of our work has no social value whatever?* Why, if we were remunerated accordingly, most of us would starve. Consider, too, our system of drumming, and advertising self-puffery. It is but beggary glossed over and reduced to a science!

Mental prostitutes, accomplices in rascality, and professional beggars—to such lives does the force of a competitive system reduce us; nor is there any escape so long as the system remains unchanged. Therefore it is, as Marx says, that the standpoint of socialism “can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them.” I have but sought to rouse you to a consciousness of our common infamy, for the evil must be felt before one revolts against it.

SOCIALISM INEVITABLE.

Scientific socialism is no ready-made suit of clothes that might be put on to-morrow. Nor does it expect to overthrow the competitive system on a Monday and have the millenium in full bloom by Sunday. It is essentially a principle of action, of reorganization. And the manner in which it can be realized must necessarily depend on the conditions existing when public opinion is sufficiently advanced to make its application possible. Socialism is in economics what democracy is in politics; the assertion of the equal right of the people in the management of affairs. It is, therefore, a principle that should appeal to workingmen with peculiar force. (A plutocracy in a republic is a monstrosity. Industrial democracy is the logical complement of political democracy. No change in human nature was required to establish the one. It came as a development of political ideals. So with the other. Through the progress of social ideals, it may be well under way long before we become conscious of the wings.

For differences of opinion there will be room in plenty. Many questions may arise that experiment alone can settle, and mistakes undoubtedly will be made. But with a basis of justice and right we may be well assured that the resulting solution of minor details will be simplicity itself as compared

with the unsolved complications in which the present system is involved. Such, for instance, as the tariff question; argued over and over, and experimented with for a century at least, yet as far from settlement as ever.

Socialism is fast becoming the all-absorbing topic of the day. It permeates the whole intellectual field. The magazines and papers are full of it. It is invading the pulpit, and will be next in the schools. To the workers it is as a religion, a vision of the Kingdom of Heaven come to earth. And it has become the inspiration of all who look to the making of life something better than a soul-crushing struggle for animal existence.

Contemptuous silence, ignorant abuse, active repression, all alike have been powerless to check its steady progress. It is useless to oppose it. One might as well fight the tides. The progress of economic evolution cannot be stopped. Capitalism is but its latest phase. Born yesterday, to-morrow it must pass away. To socialism belongs the future. In some form it is inevitable. But whether it shall come as a tyrannical plutocracy, an autocratic paternalism, or a fraternal democracy, that is for the intelligence of the people to decide.

