

SOCIALISM

I—WHERE WE CANNOT WORK WITH SOCIALISTS

It is always difficult to discuss a question when it proves impossible to define the terms in which that question is to be discussed. Therefore there is not much to be gained by a discussion of Socialism *versus* Individualism in the abstract. Neither absolute Individualism nor absolute Socialism would be compatible with civilization at all; and among the arguments of the extremists of either side the only unanswerable ones are those which show the absurdity of the position of the other. Not so much as the first step towards real civilization can be taken until there arises some development of the right of private property; that is, until men pass out of the stage of savage socialism in which the violent and the thriftless forcibly constitute themselves co-heirs with the industrious and the intelligent in what the labor of the latter produces. But it is equally true that every step toward civilization is marked by a check on individualism. The ages that have passed have fettered the individualism which found expression in physical violence, and we are now endeavoring to put shackles on that kind of individualism which finds expression in craft and greed. There is growth in all such matters. The individualism of the Tweed Ring type would have seemed both commonplace and meritorious to the Merovingian Franks, where it was not entirely beyond their comprehension; and so in future ages, if the world progresses as we hope and believe it will progress, the standards of conduct which permit individuals to make money out of pestilential tenements or by the manipulation of stocks, or to refuse to share with their employees the dreadful burdens laid upon the latter by the inevitable physical risks in a given business, will seem as amazing to our descendants as we now find the standards of a society which regarded Clovis and his immediate successors as pre-eminently fit for leadership.

With those self-styled Socialists to whom "Socialism" is merely a vaguely conceived catchword, and who use it to express their discontent with existing

wrongs and their purpose to correct them, there is not much need of discussion. So far as they make any proposals which are not foolish, and which tend towards betterment, we can act with them. But the real, logical, advanced Socialists, who teach their faith as both a creed and a party platform, may deceive to their ruin decent and well-meaning but short-sighted men; and there is need of plain speaking in order accurately to show the trend of their teaching.

The immorality and absurdity of the doctrines of Socialism as propounded by these advanced advocates are quite as great as those of the advocates, if such there be, of an unlimited individualism. As an academic matter there is more need of refutation of the creed of absolute Socialism than of the creed of absolute individualism; for it happens that at the present time a greater number of visionaries, both sinister and merely dreamy, believe in the former than in the latter. One difficulty in arguing with professed Socialists of the extreme, or indeed of the opportunist, type, however, is that those of them who are sincere almost invariably suffer from great looseness of thought; for if they did not keep their faith nebulous, it would at once become abhorrent in the eyes of any upright and sensible man. The doctrinaire Socialists, the extremists, the men who represent the doctrine in its most advanced form, are, and must necessarily be, not only convinced opponents of private property, but also bitterly hostile to religion and morality; in short, they must be opposed to all those principles through which, and through which alone, even an imperfect civilization can be built up by slow advances through the ages.

Indeed, these thoroughgoing Socialists occupy, in relation to all morality, and especially to domestic morality, a position so revolting—and I choose my words carefully—that it is difficult even to discuss it in a reputable paper. In America the leaders even of this type have usually been cautious about stating frankly that they proposed to substitute free love for married and family life as we have it, although many of them do in a round-about way uphold this position. In places on the continent of Europe, however, they

are more straightforward, their attitude being that of one of the extreme French Socialist writers, M. Gabriel Deville, who announces that the Socialists intend to do away with both prostitution and marriage, which he regards as equally wicked—his method of doing away with prostitution being to make unchastity universal. Professor Carl Pearson, a leading English Socialist, states their position exactly: "The sex relation of the future will not be regarded as a union for the birth of children, but as the closest form of friendship between man and woman. It will be accompanied by no child bearing or rearing, or by this in a much more limited number than at present. With the sex relationship, so long as it does not result in children, we hold that the State in the future will in no wise interfere, but when it does result in children, then the State will have a right to interfere." He then goes on to point out that in order to save the woman from "economic dependence" upon the father of her children, the children will be raised at the expense of the State; the usual plan being to have huge buildings like foundling asylums.

Mr. Pearson is a scientific man who, in his own realm, is as worthy of serious heed as Mr. Flinders Petrie, whom I mention later, is in his realm; and the above quotation states in naked form just what logical scientific Socialism would really come to. Aside from its thoroughly repulsive quality, it ought not to be necessary to point out that the condition of affairs aimed at would in actual practice bring about the destruction of the race within, at most, a couple of generations; and such destruction is heartily to be desired for any race of such infamous character as to tolerate such a system. Moreover, the ultra-Socialists of our own country have shown by their attitude towards one of their leaders, Mr. Herron, that, so far as law and public sentiment will permit, they are now ready to try to realize the ideals set forth by Messrs. Deville and Pearson. As for Mr. Herron, I commend to those who desire to verify what I have said, the article in the *Boston Congregationalist* of June 15, 1901; and to those, by the way, who have not the time to hunt up all the original authorities, I would commend a book called "Socialism; the Nation of

Fatherless Children," a book dedicated to the American Federation of Labor. The chapters on Free Love, Homeless Children, and Two Socialist Leaders are especially worth reading by any one who is for the moment confused by the statements of certain Socialist leaders to the effect that advanced Socialism does not contemplate an attack upon marriage and the family.

These same Socialist leaders, with a curious effrontery, at times deny that the exponents of "scientific Socialism" assume a position as regards industry which in condensed form may be stated as, that each man is to do what work he can, or, in other words, chooses, and in return is to take out from the common fund whatever he needs; or, what amounts to the same thing, that each man shall have equal remuneration with every other man, no matter what work is done. If they will turn to a little book recently written in England called "The Case Against Socialism," they will find by looking at, say, pages 229 and 300, or indeed almost at random through the book, quotations from recognized Socialist leaders taking exactly this position; indeed, it is the position generally taken—though it is often opposed or qualified, for Socialist leaders usually think confusedly, and often occupy inconsistent positions. Mrs. Besant, for instance, putting it pithily, says that we must come to the "equal remuneration of all workers;" and one of her colleagues, that "the whole of our creed is that industry shall be carried on, not for the profit of those engaged in it, whether masters or men, but for the benefit of the community. . . . It is not for the miners, bootmakers, or shop assistants as such that we Socialists claim the profits of industry, but for the citizen." In our own country, in "Socialism Made Plain," a book officially circulated by the Milwaukee division of the Socialist party, the statement is explicit: "Under the labor time-check medium of exchange proposed by Socialists, any laborer could exchange the wealth he produced in any given number of hours for the wealth produced by any other laborer in the same number of hours." It is unnecessary to point out that the pleasing idea of these writers could be realized only if

the State undertook the duty of taskmaster, for otherwise it is not conceivable that anybody whose work would be worth anything would work at all under such conditions. Under this type of Socialism, therefore, or communism, the government would have to be the most drastic possible despotism; a despotism so drastic that its realization would only be an ideal. Of course in practice such a system could not work at all; and incidentally the mere attempt to realize it would necessarily be accompanied by a corruption so gross that the blackest spot of corruption in any existing form of city government would seem bright by comparison.

In other words, on the social and domestic side doctrinaire Socialism would replace the family and home life by a glorified State free-lunch counter and State founding asylum, deliberately enthroning self-indulgence as the ideal, with, on its darker side, the absolute abandonment of all morality as between man and woman; while in place of what Socialists are pleased to call "wage slavery" there would be created a system which would necessitate either the prompt dying out of the community through sheer starvation, or an iron despotism over all workers, compared to which any slave system of the past would seem beneficent, because less utterly hopeless.

"Advanced" Socialist leaders are fond of declaiming against patriotism, of announcing their movement as international, and of claiming to treat all men alike; but on this point, as on all others, their system would not stand for one moment the test of actual experiment. If the leaders of the Socialist party in America should to-day endeavor to force their followers to admit all negroes and Chinamen to a real equality, their party would promptly disband, and, rather than submit to such putting into effect of their avowed purpose, would, as a literal fact, follow any capitalistic organization as an alternative.

It is not accident that makes thoroughgoing and radical Socialists adopt the principles of free love as a necessary sequence to insisting that no man shall have the right to what he earns. When Socialism of this really advanced and logical type is tried as it was in France in 1792, and

again under the Commune in 1871, it is inevitable that the movement, ushered in with every kind of high-sounding phrase, should rapidly spread so as to include, not merely the forcible acquisition of the property of others, but every conceivable form of monetary corruption, immorality, licentiousness, and murderous violence. In theory, distinctions can be drawn between this kind of Socialism and anarchy and nihilism; but in practice, as in 1871, the apostles of all three act together; and if the doctrines of any of them could be applied universally, all the troubles of society would indeed cease, because society itself would cease. The poor and the helpless, especially women and children, would be the first to die out, and the few survivors would go back to the condition of skin-clad savages, so that the whole painful and laborious work of social development would have to begin over again. Of course, long before such an event really happened the Socialistic régime would have been overturned, and in the reaction men would welcome any kind of one-man tyranny that was compatible with the existence of civilization.

So much for the academic side of unadulterated, or, as its advocates style it, "advanced scientific" Socialism. Its representatives in this country who have practically striven to act up to their extreme doctrines, and have achieved leadership in any one of the branches of the Socialist party, especially the parlor Socialists and the like, be they lay or clerical, deserve scant consideration at the hands of honest and clean-living men and women. What their movement leads to may be gathered from the fact that in the last Presidential election they nominated and voted for a man who earns his livelihood as the editor of a paper which not merely practices every form of malignant and brutal slander, but condones and encourages every form of brutal wrong-doing, so long as either the slander or the violence is supposed to be at the expense of a man who owns something, wholly without regard to whether that man is himself a scoundrel, or a wise, kind, and helpful member of the community. As for the so-called Christian Socialists who associate themselves with this movement, they either are or ought to be aware of the

pornographic literature, the pornographic propaganda, which make up one side of the movement; a pornographic side which is entirely proper in a movement that in this country accepts as one of its heads a man whose domestic immorality has been so open and flagrant as to merit the epithet of shameless. That criminal nonsense should be listened to eagerly by some men bowed down by the cruel condition of much of modern toil is not strange; but that men who pretend to speak with culture of mind and authority to teach, men who are or have been preachers of the Gospel or professors in universities, should affiliate themselves with the preachers of criminal nonsense is a sign of either grave mental or moral shortcoming.

I wish it to be remembered that I speak from the standpoint of, and on behalf of, the wage-worker and the tiller of the soil. These are the two men whose welfare I have ever before me, and for their sakes I would do anything, except anything that is wrong; and it is because I believe that teaching them doctrine like that which I have stigmatized represents the most cruel wrong in the long run, both to wage-worker and to earth-tiller, that I reprobate and denounce such conduct.

We need have but scant patience with those who assert that modern conditions are all that they should be, or that they cannot be improved. The wildest or most vicious of Socialistic writers could preach no more foolish doctrine than that contained in such ardent defenses of uncontrolled capitalism and individualism as Mr. Flinders Petrie's "Janus," a book which is absurd, but which, because of this very fact, is not mischievous, for it can arouse no other emotion than the very earnest desire that this particular archæological shoemaker should stick to his early-Egyptian last. There are dreadful woes in modern life, dreadful suffering among some of those who toil, brutal wrong-doing among some of those who make colossal fortunes by exploiting the toilers. It is the duty of every honest and upright man, of every man who holds within his breast the capacity for righteous indignation, to recognize these wrongs, and to strive with all his might to bring about a better condition of things. But he will never bring about this better condition by

misstating facts and advocating remedies which are not merely false, but fatal.

Take, for instance, the doctrine of the extreme Socialists, that all wealth is produced by manual workers, that the entire product of labor should be handed over every day to the laborer, that wealth is criminal in itself. Of course wealth is no more criminal than labor. Human society could not exist without both; and if all wealth were abolished this week, the majority of laborers would starve next week. As for the statement that all wealth is produced by manual workers, in order to appreciate its folly it is merely necessary for any man to look at what is happening right around him, in the next street, or the next village. Here in the city where *The Outlook* is edited, on Broadway between Ninth and Tenth Streets, is a huge dry goods store. The business was originally started, and the block of which I am speaking was built for the purpose, by an able New York merchant. It prospered. He and those who invested under him made a good deal of money. Their employees did well. Then he died, and certain other people took possession of it and tried to run the business. The manual labor was the same, the good-will was the same, the physical conditions were the same; but the guiding intelligence at the top had changed. The business was run at a loss. It would surely have had to shut, and all the employees, clerks, laborers, everybody turned adrift, to infinite suffering, if it had not again changed hands and another business man of capacity taken charge. The business was the same as before, the physical conditions were the same, the good-will the same, the manual labor the same, but the guiding intelligence had changed, and now everything once more prospered, and prospered as had never been the case before. With such an instance before our very eyes, with such proof of what every business proves, namely, the vast importance of the part played by the guiding intelligence in business, as in war, in invention, in art, in science, in every imaginable pursuit, it is really difficult to show patience when asked to discuss such a proposition as that all wealth is produced solely by the work of manual workers, and that the entire prod-

uct should be handed over to them. Of course, if any such theory were really acted upon, there would soon be no product to be handed over to the manual laborers, and they would die of starvation. A great industry could no more be managed by a mass-meeting of manual laborers than a battle could be won in such fashion, than a painters' union could paint a Rembrandt, or a typographical union write one of Shakespeare's plays.

The fact is that this kind of Socialism represents an effort to enthrone privilege in its crudest form. Much of what we are fighting against in modern civilization is privilege. We fight against privilege when it takes the form of a franchise to a street railway company to enjoy the use of the streets of a great city without paying an adequate return; when it takes the form of a great business combination which grows rich by rebates which are denied to other shippers; when it takes the form of a stock-gambling operation which results in the watering of railway securities so that certain inside men get an enormous profit out of a swindle on the public. All these represent various forms of illegal, or, if not illegal, then anti-social, privilege. But there can be no greater abuse, no greater example of corrupt and destructive privilege, than that advocated by those who say that each man should put into a common store what he can and take out what he needs. This is merely another way of saying that the thriftless and the vicious, who could or would put in but little, should be entitled to take out the earnings of the intelligent, the foresighted, and the industrious. Such a proposition is morally base. To choose to live by theft or by charity means in each case degradation, a rapid lowering of self-respect and self-reliance. The worst wrongs that capitalism can commit upon labor would sink into insignificance when compared with the hideous wrong done by those who would degrade labor by sapping the foundations of self-respect and self-reliance. The Roman mob, living on the bread given them by the State and clamoring for excitement and amusement to be purveyed by the State, represent for all time the very nadir to which a free and self-respecting population of workers can sink if they grow habitually to rely upon

others, and especially upon the State, either to furnish them charity, or to permit them to plunder, as a means of livelihood.

In short, it is simply common sense to recognize that there is the widest inequality of service, and that therefore there must be an equally wide inequality of reward, if our society is to rest upon the basis of justice and wisdom. Service is the true test by which a man's worth should be judged. We are against privilege in any form: privilege to the capitalist who exploits the poor man, and privilege to the shiftless or vicious poor man who would rob his thrifty brother of what he has earned. Certain exceedingly valuable forms of service are rendered wholly without capital. On the other hand, there are exceedingly valuable forms of service which can be rendered only by means of great accumulations of capital, and not to recognize this fact would be to deprive our whole people of one of the great agencies for their betterment. The test of a man's worth to the community is the service he renders to it, and we cannot afford to make this test by material considerations alone. One of the main vices of the Socialism which was propounded by Proudhon, Lassalle, and Marx, and which is preached by their disciples and imitators, is that it is blind to everything except the merely material side of life. It is not only indifferent, but at bottom hostile, to the intellectual, the religious, the domestic and moral life; it is a form of communism with no moral foundation, but essentially based on the immediate annihilation of personal ownership of capital, and, in the near future, the annihilation of the family, and ultimately the annihilation of civilization.

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