

## SOCIALISM

### II—WHERE WE CAN WORK WITH SOCIALISTS

**I**T is true that the doctrines of communistic Socialism, if consistently followed, mean the ultimate annihilation of civilization. Yet the converse is also true. Ruin faces us if we decline steadily to try to reshape our whole civilization in accordance with the law of service, and if we permit ourselves to be misled by any empirical or academic consideration into refusing to exert the common power of the community where only collective action can do what individualism has left undone, or can remedy the wrongs done by an unrestricted and ill-regulated individualism. There is any amount of evil in our social and industrial conditions of today, and unless we recognize this fact and try resolutely to do what we can to remedy the evil, we run great risk of seeing men in their misery turn to the false teachers whose doctrines would indeed lead them to greater misery, but who do at least recognize the fact that they are now miserable. At the present time there are scores of laws in the interest of labor—laws putting a stop to child labor, decreasing the hours of labor where they are excessive, putting a stop to unsanitary crowding and living, securing employers' liability, doing away with unhealthy conditions in various trades, and the like—which should be passed by the National and the various State Legislatures; and those who wish to do effective work against Socialism would do well to turn their energies into securing the enactment of these laws.

Moreover, we should always remember that Socialism is both a wide and a loose term, and that the self-styled Socialists are of many and utterly different types. If we should study only the professed apostles of radical Socialism, of what these men themselves like to call "scientific Socialism," or if we should study only what active leaders of Socialism in this country have usually done, or read only the papers in which they have usually expressed themselves, we would gain an utterly wrong impression of very many men who call themselves Socialists. There are many peculiarly high-minded men and women

who like to speak of themselves as Socialists, whose attitude, conscious or unconscious, is really merely an indignant recognition of the evil of present conditions and an ardent wish to remedy it, and whose Socialism is really only an advanced form of liberalism. Many of these men and women in actual fact take a large part in the advancement of moral ideas, and in practice wholly repudiate the purely materialistic and therefore sordid, doctrines of those Socialists whose creed really is in sharp antagonism to every principle of public and domestic morality, who war on private property with a bitterness but little greater than that with which they war against the institutions of the home and the family, and against every form of religion, Catholic or Protestant. The Socialists of this moral type may in practice be very good citizens indeed, with whom we can at many points co-operate. They are often joined temporarily with what are called the "opportunistic Socialists"—those who may advocate an impossible and highly undesirable Utopia as a matter of abstract faith, but who in practice try to secure the adoption only of some given principle which will do away with some phase of existing wrong. With these two groups of Socialists it is often possible for all far-sighted men to join heartily in the effort to secure a given reform or do away with a given abuse. Probably, in practice, wherever and whenever Socialists of these two types are able to form themselves into a party, they will disappoint both their own expectations and the fears of others by acting very much like other parties, like other aggregations of men; and it will be safe to adopt whatever they advance that is wise, and to reject whatever they advance that is foolish, just as we have to do as regards countless other groups who on one issue or set of issues come together to strive for a change in the political or social conditions of the world we live in. The important thing is generally the next step. We ought not to take it unless we are sure that it is advisable; but we should not hesitate to take it when once we are sure; and we can safely join with others who also wish to take it, without bothering our heads overmuch as to any somewhat fantastic theories they may have

concerning, say, the two hundredth step, which is not yet in sight.

There are many schemes proposed which their enemies, and a few of their friends, are pleased to call Socialistic, or which are indorsed and favored by men who call themselves Socialists, but which are entitled each to be considered on its merits with regard only to the practical advantage which each would confer. Every public man, every reformer, is bound to refuse to dismiss these schemes with the shallow statement that they are "Socialistic;" for such an attitude is one of mere mischievous dogmatism. There are communities in which our system of State education is still resisted and condemned as Socialism; and we have seen within the past two years in this country men who were themselves directors in National banks, which were supervised by the Government, object to such supervision of railways by the Government on the ground that it was "Socialistic." An employers' liability law is no more Socialistic than a fire department; the regulation of railway rates is by no means as Socialistic as the digging and enlarging of the Erie Canal at the expense of the State. A proper compensation law would merely distribute over the entire industry the shock of accident or disease, instead of limiting it to the unfortunate individual on whom, through no fault of his, it happened to fall. As communities become more thickly settled and their lives more complex, it grows ever more and more necessary for some of the work formerly performed by individuals, each for himself, to be performed by the community for the community as a whole. Isolated farms need no complicated system of sewerage; but this does not mean that public control of sewerage in a great city should be resisted on the ground that it tends toward Socialism. Let each proposition be treated on its own merits, soberly and cautiously, but without any of that rigidity of mind which fears all reform. If, for instance, the question arises as to the establishment of day nurseries for the children of mothers who work in factories, the obvious thing to do is to approach it with an open mind, listen to the arguments for and against, and, if necessary, try the experi-

ment in actual practice. If it is alleged that small groups of farmers have prospered by doing much of their work in common, and by a kind of mutual insurance and supervision, why of course we should look into the matter with an open mind, and try to find out, not what we want the facts to be, but what the facts really are.

We cannot afford to subscribe to the doctrine, equally hard and foolish, that the welfare of the children in the tenement-house district is no concern of the community as a whole. If the child of the thronged city cannot live in decent surroundings, have teaching, have room to play, have good water and clean air, then not only will he suffer, but in the next generation the whole community will to a greater or less degree share his suffering.

In striving to better our industrial life we must ever keep in mind that, while we cannot afford to neglect its material side, we can even less afford to disregard its moral and intellectual side. Each of us is bound to remember that he is in very truth his brother's keeper, and that his duty is, with judgment and common sense, to try to help the brother. To the base and greedy attitude of mind which adopts as its motto, "What is thine is mine," we oppose the doctrine of service, the doctrine that insists that each of us, in no hysterical manner, but with common sense and good judgment, and without neglect of his or her own interests, shall yet act on the saying, "What is mine I will in good measure make thine also."

Socialism strives to remedy what is evil alike in domestic and in economic life, and its tendency is to insist that the economic remedy is all-sufficient in every case. We should all join in the effort to do away with the evil; but we should refuse to have anything to do with remedies which are either absurd or mischievous, for such, of course, would merely aggravate the present suffering. The first thing to recognize is that, while economic reform is often vital, it is never all-sufficient. The moral reform, the change of character—in which law can sometimes play a large, but never the largest, part—is the most necessary of all. In dealing with the

marriage relation the Socialist attitude is one of unmixed evil. Assuredly woman should be guarded and honored in every way, her rights jealously upheld, and any wrong done her should be regarded and punished with severe judgment; but we must keep in mind the obvious fact that equality of consideration does not mean identity of function. Our effort should be to raise the level of self-respect, self-control, sense of duty in both sexes, and not to push both down to an evil equality of moral turpitude by doing away with the self-restraint and sense of obligation which have been slowly built up through the ages. We must bring them to a moral level by raising the lower standard, not by depressing the high. It is idle to prattle against the "economic dependence" of woman upon man. In the ideal household—an ideal which I believe, though very far from being universally realized, is yet now more generally realized than ever before—there is really complete economic interdependence, as well as the high spiritual and moral interdependence which is more nearly attained in happy wedlock, in a permanent partnership of love and duty, than in any other relation of life which the world has yet seen. Rights should be forfeited by neither partner; and duties should be shirked by neither partner. The duty of the woman to be the child-bearer and home-keeper is just as obvious, simple, and healthful as the duty of the man to be the breadwinner and, if necessary, the soldier. Whenever either the man or the woman loses the power or the will to perform these obvious duties, the loss is irreparable, and, whatever may be the gain in ease, amiable softness, self-indulgent pleasure, or even artistic and material achievement, the whole civilization is rotten and must fall.

So with our industrial system. In many respects the wage system can be bettered; but screaming about "wage slavery" is largely absurd; at this moment, for instance, I am a "wage slave" of The Outlook. Under certain conditions and in certain cases the co-operative system can to a greater or less degree be substituted with advantage for, or, more often, can be used to supplement, the wage system; but only on condition of recognizing the widely different needs occasioned

by different conditions, which needs are so diverse that they must sometimes be met in totally different ways.

We should do everything that can be done, by law or otherwise, to keep the avenues of occupation, of employment, of work, of interest, so open that there shall be, so far as it is humanly possible to achieve it, a measurable equality of opportunity; an equality of opportunity for each man to show the stuff that is in him. When it comes to reward, let each man, within the limits set by a sound and far-sighted morality, get what, by his energy, intelligence, thrift, courage, he is able to get, with the opportunity open. We must set our faces against privilege; just as much against the kind of privilege which would let the shiftless and lazy laborer take what his brother has earned as against the privilege which allows the huge capitalist to take toll to which he is not entitled. We stand for equality of opportunity, but not for equality of reward unless there is also equality of service. If the service is equal, let the reward be equal; but let the reward depend on the service; and, mankind being composed as it is, there will be inequality of service for a long time to come, no matter how great the equality of opportunity may be; and just so long as there is inequality of service it is eminently desirable that there should be inequality of reward.

We recognize, and are bound to war against, the evils of to-day. The remedies are partly economic and partly spiritual, partly to be obtained by laws, and in greater part to be obtained by individual and associated effort; for character is the vital matter, and character cannot be created by law. These remedies include a religious and moral teaching which shall increase the spirit of human brotherhood; an educational system which shall train men for every form of useful service—and which shall train us to prize common sense no less than morality; such a division of the profits of industry as shall tend to encourage intelligent and thrifty tool-users to become tool-owners; and a government so strong, just, wise, and democratic that, neither lagging too far behind nor pushing heedlessly in advance, it may do its full share in promoting these ends.

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