


Social Unrest and Civic Inertness.

F all the doctrines that rose and reigned during the past hundred years, none now claim so many supporters as Socialism. It now boasts a strong following in Europe and America ; its members are found in parliaments and cabinets, its papers and pamphlets are distributed broadcast, its orators speak to eager crowds on the street corners and gather together in halls and lecture rooms their audiences of haggard men and pinch-faced women, and the end is not yet. The legislation of several countries in Europe is now becoming tinged with socialist hues ; it colors deeply many laws of France and Italy and in the opinion of many the present English Budget owes not a little to the inspiration of John Burns and Philip Snowden. Yet that doctrine, condemned in press and pulpit, has called forth words of warning from many of our greatest thinkers. What then are the reasons for its rapid spread and great popularity and how can it be combated most effectively or even turned to good use ? To these two questions I shall endeavor to give answer ; as they are questions seldom if ever touched upon by the generality of Anti-Socialist writers and speakers.

Like every other extravagant doctrine ever known to the world Socialism has some basis of truth ; the laboring class have suffered and are suffering injustices at the hands of the employing class. In the words of W. S. Lilly "The real value of Socialism lies in the inevitable and indispensable protest of the working class and their aspirations after a better order of things." For the past one hundred and fifty years they have seen the employers amass great wealth, live in idleness and luxury, squander on entertainment and

dress, wealth wrung from the poor laborers, who see their own homes remain as small, their living as meagre as in the days of long ago. Wages, certainly, have increased. But so has the cost of living. Factory life has, in many instances, improved, conditions in and around mines have been bettered; in many places more sanitary dwellings have been provided, but the conditions of many laborers have remained in their primal stage or perhaps grown worse. We yet look on and see the lower and more difficult kinds of labor done as they were at the beginning; pick and shovel are the "field-equipment" of our street laborers, as they were of the Roman slaves; we yet see our women on bended knees scrubbing our floors, while all will admit, that the stokers on an Ocean Greyhound are worse off and suffer more than did their forbears on "Fulton's Folly" a hundred years ago. While we allow that, and, apparently, think it right, you can scarcely enter an office of any account where you are not greeted by a high-class typewriter, not a sash and door factory but has machinery for almost all the work, not a hotel or office building but has replaced its stairs by well-fitted elevators, so we leave the most unpleasant kinds of work in the garb of venerable antiquity and spend fortunes trying to improve those that were, from the beginning, far more pleasant.

Then very many of our employers remain quite indifferent as to the life of their workmen. We are now becoming quite familiar with fire-proof structures, buildings intended to withstand even earthquake shocks; but in our coal-mines small or no provision is made for the life of our workmen else mining accidents should not be so deadly. The inventive mind of this 20th century could surely devise some kind of protection for life in case of accidents from fire in mines; we find fire-proof vaults in all our large offices; could not

then mining companies be obliged to have fire-proof chambers to which their entrapped miners might make their way in times of danger. The recent accident at Cherry, Ill. should certainly call attention to the great fact that lives could have been saved, had the poor miners even been able to find bread and water, and surely, had there been well-known places of safety in the mines, some, at least, of the imprisoned miners could have found their way thither and that very fact and such a place would simplify the work and minimize the danger of rescue parties. Then the death and injuries of these men suggest another great question; who is to support the wives and children of the men who perished? who is to support the men injured during the course of the year? Every year there are thousands who receive permanent injury while on duty, some of course, through their own carelessness, but many, through the fault of employers who prefer big profits to the life of workmen and who, too often, look upon certain classes of workmen as beneath any thought of care and responsibility on their part. Of course, many companies have to pay big damages for injuries and death of their employees; but the families and relatives of a poor workmen are seldom in a position to bring the company to justice; the mere matter of legal expenses render many unable to enter court and cope with a company, whose expert lawyers can carry a case to courts beyond the purses of the poor.

Then the people see and know that many companies are really extravagant; that friends of the management secure positions for which they were never intended by nature, nor fashioned by art, that the work of these men is done by others whose salary is small enough. In every large business one may find men who get and hold their position by "pull" while capable men are kept below to do the work which favorites are paid for

doing and cannot do. The ordinary laborer knows also that these large companies "water" stock and possess themselves of the proceeds, that they intentionally combine and raise the price of goods. It is generally known that our present commercial conditions are wasteful and inefficient. Competition, spoken of as the life of trade, may be also the death of tradesmen and to prevent such deaths our producers put on the road numbers of travellers, must also turn the rail-road fences into picture galleries of advertising and make our magazines bulky with striking advertisements. Of course, we are told that all this is good for trade. It may be, but such advertising costs in the United States about \$300,000,000 per year—a heavy price to keep the wheels of commerce moving. Again it is not an uncommon thing to see two rail-road or steam boat lines bidding for trade over the route where one such line could handle the traffic; the two lines between New York and Chicago run through the same country and on the same schedule; the two steam boat lines between Vancouver and Seattle are doing the same and trying to ruin one another. Such rival lines cost in the United States about \$200,000,000 per year. On mere advertising and rival lines, then, there is spent yearly half a billion, enough to house decently all the poor in the country and perhaps give them a few meals of better quality than those of our necessary soup kitchens.

The above is only a small portion of the facts heaped in the mind of the proletariat; but the mass is soon leavened by the yeast of socialism; and then it begins to ferment and grow dangerous. The great majority of our workmen are uneducated; the socialist orator makes much of the grievances known to be existent; the injustice of capital and capitalists is laid before both hearers and readers; they know so much to be true, and

when remedies are proposed and explained they readily give assent. There are many parts of the proposed system that fill a longing in the heart and seem to be in accord with what is just. The promise of equal reward for all means that the lower-class workman will receive as much as his well paid superintendent; then there are to be better cottages for all, well equipped schools, state-supported places of amusement, cheaper fares on trains and electric cars; so all see visions of a glorious future surpassing the poet's Grand Pre for there "the richest was poor and the poorest lived in abundance;" but in the Grand Pre of the socialist Longfellow the poorest will be rich and all shall live in abundance.

The poor, underpaid, under educated workman would indeed be sluggish did he not grow enthusiastic over such ideals. And the whole plan is so plausible; the profits that now make millionaires will, when the state controls all manufacturing and industry, be divided among the workers, and there will be no such thing as an idle class; for all shall be taught trades; poverty and idleness are to disappear at once. Workmen fail to see how the doctrine can be condemned. They may, through the glowing scheme, perceive that changes must be made; that patriotism is doomed but that he can stand for its loss is to be supplied by another "ism" that promises more than the old time love of a country that was not a mother, but a step-mother; class distinction is to go and that will be a decided gain, for classes are at the bottom of the troubles today.

The greater part of our socialist orators are men who know their work too well to offend their possible converts; hence it is, that the unsafe and unsavory parts of their doctrines are kept in the background or only implicitly conveyed, till the neophyte has become a solid socialist. I said the danger was implicitly conveyed in the early teaching; for it was

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general condemnation of existing conditions and abuse of capitalist, he commits to memory lists of statistics telling giant falsehoods, which his mind cannot detect; then and then only does he begin to get the philosophy of the system; a philosophy based on falsehoods and fallacies which his mind cannot recognize as such. It was one of the fallen angels "whose tongue dropped manna and could make the worse appear the better reason" and the socialist Belials are the equals of their prototype. Frederick Engels, one of their founders, says: "The judicial, philosophical and religious ideas are the more or less remote offshoots of the economic relations of a given society." and George D. Herron an American socialist leader, paraphrases this idea in the following glib sentences "The world's sentiments and religion, its laws and morals, its art and literature are all rooted in the struggle between the classes for the food supply" and again "Laws, creeds, government, morals and art are chiefly the expression of those who lived off others, and make these, to compel others to support them." There is not a word of truth in these expressions; the contrary is the truth. It was religion and morals, laws and literature that made possible our present commercial institutions. The idea of authority and law, morals and religion belonged to all people and were, everywhere well in the foreground before anyone began to dream of economic relations, which were, in every country, moulded, colored, determined, by the religious belief. Still the ordinary socialist convert has never traced the world's history from its small beginning and such theories as Herron's pass for Gospel. The enlarged views (?) consequent on these new theories soon beget opinions tending towards greater liberty. It is the church, consequently religion, that insists on obedience to law, on

duty to God and man, on the permanency of the marriage bond; but, according to the new interpretation, that law and church are the result of "struggle over the food supply" and the class representing that church and law have no power over others, and should therefore be relegated to the region of things that once were and now are not. These impediments being dropped it is no far call to advocate the confiscation of the wealth and property of the rich, because such wealth should belong to the workers, and thus, step by step and by what, to his mind, is logical development, that man becomes a full fledged socialist, a worthy disciple of Mark and Engels, a co-partner and co-worker with Jaures and Babel, Carpenter and Aveling, Herron and John D. Spargo and the friend of Miss Florence Farr and Mrs Philip Snowden * who is now touring in Canada, and being listened to by the ladies of Montreal.

Such are some of the reasons for the advance of socialism. The workmen have suffered serious wrong, our governments do little to protect them, the doctrinaires of socialism propose very alluring changes and, as these seem quite legitimate, the ordinary man becomes a follower of a doctrine he does not and cannot understand, and not till he becomes imbued with its teaching does he see the full scope of the movement, and then he is so far convinced that he never tries to see through that philosophic system built so well on false reading of history and materialistic concept of human society. *Facilis decensus averni*: so even well intentioned men are, through their own simplicity and the astuteness of others let to clap their hands and bare their brows at the very name of a society to which they

*NOTE—Mrs. Snowden, in one of her works, advocates raising the social sin to the dignity of a profession. Did the good ladies of Montreal know this when listening to the suffragette visitor?

should never have given their support, were christianity a directing force with the parliaments and people of the land.

Hitherto pen and pulpit have sent forth condemnations that were perfectly true, but were not heeded because no attempt was made at supplying an organization to replace the one condemned. Talk as we like, socialism has, by its loud clamor and generous programme, been the means of securing better conditions for labor and greater improvements are to follow. The classes who should be leaders and guides remain apathetic and apparently content with philosophic arguments that are very unwelcome to the men who want bread. The laborers are trying to help themselves and we blame them for doing so.

The greater number could be withheld from socialism if improved conditions could be secured by constitutional means. If the labor class were satisfied in getting just wages, in securing better conditions under which to work in shop or factory and some insurance against accident and sickness, they would never associate themselves with a society that runs so counter to traditional institutions and the reverential sentiments inspired by christianity. Our lack of real interest may well appear the cause of our small success and the work approved in other countries might be followed at home. Bishop Van Kettle and Dollinger inaugurated a movement in Germany that was of great service and by its just demands, aided very materially in moving Bismark to bring forward sound legislation providing Government insurance against accident and sickness, old-age pensions and some other regulations greatly benefitting the laborer and depriving him of any reason for seeking help in radical socialism. Switzerland has gone farther and has now insurance against unemployment which, though not of long standing, gives

promise of success. It might be more difficult of operation in a field so wide as Amercia, but might be possible of adoption. Our sister colonies 'beneath the Southern Cross' have left us behind in social legislation and are now beyond the day when the bad faith of employees or greed of capitalists can disturb the country's trade by strikes. The strike is a cruel weapon belonging to the stone-age of our industrial life, and yet neither the United States nor Canada has any efficient remedy against it. The Lemieux Act goes part of the way and will, let us hope, become more efficient by having its decisions made binding on both parties. The law is an attempt in the right direction and our present Minister of Labor could easily complete the work begun by the maker of the present act. The act does not seem to have the confidence of either capitalist or laborers and that could probably be secured by having the members of the Board of Enquiry chosen by the classes interested. The capitalists, as an association, could be allowed to choose one member, the delegates of the different labor unions choose another and these two agree to a third and so form a permanent body that could have the support and confidence of all. In any matter of dispute then let this board go into the case carefully, examine the standing of the employers, the provision made for the health and general well-being of their men, the amount of work demanded of each man per day, and methods of payment. Into the conditions of the employees they could make careful enquiry, examining the rate of wages, rent and quality of cottages, cost of food, fuel and clothing and etc. In this way the board will be enabled to understand the grievances of both sides and on that data they can give a fair decision which could be made binding on both sides under a penalty proportionate to the interests involved. Such a mode of procedure in this

country could have settled strikes that caused great loss and left behind them a legacy of hatred for future days. The present troubles at Glace Bay could surely have been avoided in that way and the strike of the C. P. R. mechanics in 1908 would never have existed had the rulings of the board of inquiry been obligatory. By such means we can eliminate the terrible loss caused by strikes, and render both labor and capital more secure; without some such means we are certainly paving the way to anarchy and socialism.

Again, might not a widely diffused social reform society be made a means of securing many improvements by educating the public to the issues involved, and bringing matters of moment before our parliaments as occasion demanded. Under good leadership a labor party is excellent, but there is the great danger of having in the end a small minority controlling the majority. But with a lively interest in the condition of the labor class, a greater insistence of the duties and obligations of employer and employee, and parliamentarians looking to the welfare of all classes of the community, we could render the proletariat so secure that the demands and aspirations of socialism could remain unheeded and perhaps unheard. With capital and labor enjoying mutual confidence, and with the general public supporting and trusting both, our future should witness the fulfilment of that greatness of which Canada's youth gave promise.

A. B. MACDONALD.

S. D. C., Dec. 14th.