

CHAPTER IV.

THE METHODS OF SOCIALISM.

THE Socialist conception of industrial and political evolution as sketched in the preceding chapter, has been variously characterized by critics of the movement as a "Philosophy of Fatalism" or as "Political Calvinism." The mistake underlying this criticism is the notion that the Socialists expect the final realization of their social ideal to come about automatically through the unconscious workings of the inherent forces of social development. As a matter of fact, the Socialists are very far from harboring any such illusion. They hold that no system can be radically changed until it is ripe for the transformation, and they consider the degree of development of every country of prime importance in determining whether it offers fertile ground for the success of Socialism. But they realize that the mere maturity of a country for the Socialist régime will not produce Socialism without conscious, planned and deliberate action on the part of such portion of the people as have the desire, power and sagacity to accomplish the concrete task of the socialization of the industries and the reorganization of our government to that end. If we

attempt to grow oranges, we must first make sure that we have selected the proper soil and climate, but the soil and climate will not produce oranges unless we sow the seed and tend, care for, and aid the plant during all stages of its growth. Or to take an historic illustration. The ruling classes of to-day, the capitalists, could not and did not gain political supremacy until they had attained economic ascendancy, but when that point was reached their actual political victories were brought about by the propaganda of their writers and speakers, the French Encyclopædists, the English Rationalists, Utilitarians, etc., by the work of their leaders and statesmen, and above all, by the organizations of their class and its supporters.

The introduction of the Socialist régime depends on two main conditions:

First: The economic situation of the country must be ripe for the change.

Second: The people of the country must be ready for it.

The first condition takes care of itself. The task of the Socialist movement is to bring about the second condition, and it is this aim which determines the methods and the practical program of the movement.

Whether the Socialist order is to be ushered in by a revolutionary decree, or by a series of legislative enactments or executive proclamations, it can be established and maintained only by the people in control of the country. In other words, Socialism, like any other national political program, can be realized only

when its adherents, sympathizers and supporters, are numerous enough to wrest the machinery of government from their opponents, and to use it for the realization of their program. The only previous time in the history of the United States that the country could boast of a political party with a social program was when the Republican Party was first organized for the abolition of slavery, and that program was not realized until the party was strong enough to win a national election. The Civil War does not alter this cardinal fact. It simply meant that the minority was not ready to give up without a fight, but if the abolitionists had not been in control of the government there would obviously be no provocation for the fight and no chance for the victory.

Experience has demonstrated that as soon as the Socialist Party develops menacing political strength, all non-Socialist parties combine against it. Milwaukee is not the only illustration of this tendency. The same practice has been followed in all countries of Europe in which the Socialist movement is an important political factor, and will in time undoubtedly become the accepted rule in the United States. To be victorious, the Socialists will, therefore, in all likelihood require an absolute majority of the voters and the population. Not necessarily an absolute majority of trained Socialist thinkers and workers, but a majority of persons generally ready to cast their fortunes with the Socialist movement.

The first task of the Socialist movement is thus to

increase the number of Socialists, to convert the people to the Socialist creed. Socialism is primarily a movement of education and propaganda. The Socialist propaganda does not originate from a mere desire to spread the truth—for the benefit of the unconverted, as the Christian propaganda is inspired by a general ethical zeal to save the souls of the heathen. The Socialist propaganda is the very life-nerve of the movement. Upon its success or failure depends the destiny of Socialism. The educational and propagandist activities dominate all other forms of organized Socialist work, and none but the closest observers can appreciate the gigantic accomplishments of the movement in this field.

In the recent Presidential campaign, the National Campaign Committee of the Socialist Party printed and circulated thirteen millions of pamphlets. The pamphlets as a rule consisted of sixteen pages and dealt with the most vital and timely social problems from a Socialist point of view. The numerous state and local organizations of the party at the same time printed and distributed at least an equal number of pamphlets or leaflets, and thus no less than twenty-five million pieces of Socialist literature were given to the people of this country to read and study within the three months preceding the election of 1912. But the Socialist propaganda is by no means limited to campaigns. The dissemination of Socialist literature goes on steadily and systematically, though on a smaller scale, every day of the year, and it is not con-

fined to pamphleteering. The Socialist Party in this country is supported by numerous periodical publications: daily and weekly newspapers and monthly magazines. Every language of any importance spoken in this country, about thirty in all, is represented in the Socialist press. Some of the Socialist publications count their circulation by hundreds of thousands, and all of them are primarily given to propaganda. Unlike the ordinary press, their political creed is not a mere incident to them—it is the entire object and reason for their existence. They are published to preach Socialism; every other consideration is subordinated to that purpose.

And side by side with the propaganda of the printed word goes the equally effective oral propaganda. The Socialist Party has 130,000 dues-paying members, and almost every one of these is an ardent propagandist. If he is not blessed with the gift of public oratory, he talks Socialism at his home, in his shop, in his union, in his club or saloon. Thousands of meetings are held every year in all parts of the country—public demonstrations, campaign meetings, debates or lectures, and all of them deal with the one paramount topic—Socialism. In the winter of 1911-1912 the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party established a "Socialist Lecture Lyceum Bureau," and more than two thousand lectures were delivered under its auspices during the initial season of that institution.

And with all that it must be borne in mind that

the Socialist movement is only beginning to gain a foothold in this country. Its educational and propaganda work is tame compared with the accomplishment of the older and stronger Socialist movements in the countries of Europe. The work of Socialist education all over the world is probably the most active intellectual factor operating in modern society.

The Socialists do not address themselves to an indiscriminate audience. They realize that their program does not appeal with equal force to all classes of the people. Socialism aims at the destruction of all economic privileges and all class rule. The Socialists contend that the realization of their program will ultimately benefit the entire human race, but they fully and frankly recognize that its immediate effects will be damaging to the beneficiaries of the present order and advantageous to its victims. In other words, Socialism necessarily involves an immediate material loss to the capitalist classes—and a corresponding gain to the working classes. The Socialists, therefore, make their appeal primarily to the workers. They do not disdain the support of men and women from the more privileged classes. A rather considerable proportion of active Socialists has always been recruited from the ranks of non-workers. But numerous as these cases may be, they are still exceptions to the rule. An individual may be guided by purely ethical motives and rise above his material advantages, but economic classes as such are always moved by their immediate interests. The capitalist revolution was organized and

led by the capitalists, although a number of nobles, inspired by the new spirit of "liberty and democracy," made common cause with the enemies of their own class.

Nor are the Socialist activities confined to the work of propaganda. Modern Socialists do not expect the Socialist order to be introduced by one sudden and great political cataclysm, nor do they expect it to be established by a rabble made desperate by misery and starvation. The Socialists expect that the co-operative commonwealth will be planfully built by an intelligent and disciplined working class, thoroughly organized, well trained, and fully qualified to assume the reins of government and the management of the industries. Next to the education of the workers in the philosophy of Socialism, the prime task of the Socialist movement is, therefore, their political and economic organization. The Socialist movement of each country presents itself primarily as a political party, the party of the working class. Like all other political parties, the Socialist Party nominates candidates and strives to win elections and to pass legislative measures, but unlike other parties it attributes but slight importance to such temporary political victories. The deeper objects of Socialist politics are: (1) To make propaganda for the cause of Socialism, for which political campaigns always offer favorable opportunities. (2) To acquaint the workers with the concrete political problems of the country and to educate them in practical politics. (3) To gain repre-

sentation in the legislatures and in municipal administrations in order to secure true reforms for the workers, to train them in the art of statesmanship and to afford them larger opportunities for propaganda.

(4) To wean the workers from the influence of the old parties, to develop their political independence and class consciousness and to organize them for the final practical task of the Socialist movement—the winning of the government by the workers.

This view accounts for the seeming peculiarities of Socialist politics—the insistence of the Socialist Party in nominating full tickets even where its candidates have not the remotest chance of election, and its obstinate refusal to combine with any other party for any purpose. For the ultimate aim of Socialism the clearness, integrity and purity of the movement mean more than office or temporary political success.

In the Socialist conception, politics is only a means to an end. Temporary and local political power is valuable, mainly as affording an opportunity for economic reform, and the final national political victory of the workers will be of vital importance only as a necessary preliminary to the introduction of the system of collective and co-operative industries. A general political victory of the workers would be barren of results if the workers were not at the same time prepared to take over the management of the industries. The Socialists, therefore, seek to train the workers in economic no less than in political self-government.

It is for that reason that the movement everywhere seeks alliance with the economic organizations of labor, the trade-unions and the co-operative societies.

The trade and labor-unions are an efficient instrument for the organization of the productive forces of industry, the co-operative movement trains the workers in the independent, collective management of industrial processes. The Socialists are ever active in the organization of trade-unions and co-operative workingmen's societies and in the support of their work and struggles. In Germany, Austria and other countries in which the Socialist movement antedated the economic organizations of labor, the latter largely owe their existence to the Socialists. In Belgium and the Scandinavian countries the Socialist Party, trade-unions and co-operative societies are almost organically united. In the English-speaking countries, in which the beginning of the Socialist movement found the economic organizations of labor fully established, the Socialists bend every effort to bring about a friendly understanding with them and a policy of mutual support. The Socialist activities in the economic organizations of labor are not mere meddling or political flirtation. They are an organic part of the practical work of the Socialist Party. Socialism, trade-unionism and the co-operative movement are but different phases of the general modern labor movement. Within their respective spheres all of them, consciously or unconsciously, make for the same goal,

and each of them gains strength and efficacy from the support of the others.

The struggles of labor have besides another deep social significance for the Socialists. Every material improvement in the workers' lives tends to raise their intellectual level, and to develop their ability to organize and fight for a social ideal. The Socialist movement recruits its adherents mostly from among the better situated, better trained and more intelligent workers. The unfortunate "slum proletarians," whose energies, hopes and ambitions have been crushed out by misery and destitution, can only rarely be relied on to rally to the virile battle cry of Socialism.

The main points in the Socialist program of practical work may thus be summarized under the three heads of Education, Organization and Struggle for the Material Improvement of the Working Class.

Within the last few years there has developed in the United States a group of persons who advocate the addition of certain alleged new and more direct and effective weapons to the arsenal of the Socialist warfare. The general strike and resort to drastic and violent methods in labor struggles are the favorite measures thus advocated. They go by the somewhat vague designation of "direct action," "sabotage," etc., and their advocates style themselves "syndicalists" or "direct actionists." They are small in number, but exceedingly active, and the sensational

press of the country is giving them a generous amount of benevolent attention.

The movement is not serious and will not change the character of American Socialism. It is an expression of impatience and despair, which is quite natural, though not justifiable, in the period of youth and weakness of the Socialist movement. When Socialism grows strong and enters upon a career of true struggles and accomplishments, the syndicalist notions are bound to disappear. In Germany, Austria, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries syndicalism is an unknown quantity, but it flourishes in the countries in which the Socialist movement is least organized and stable, Italy and France. In fact, American syndicalism has been bodily imported from France with its entire undigested and untranslated terminology.

Guerrilla methods of warfare, chicanery and violence have no legitimate place in the methods of modern Socialism. They are at variance with the most fundamental conceptions of the movement.

The objective point of the Socialist attack is the capitalist system, not the individual capitalists. The struggles of the movement represent the organized efforts of the entire working class, not the daring of the individual leader or hero. The intellectual level and political ripeness of the working class are determined by the training of the men and women constituting that class, and not by the more advanced visions of a small group of it. A country can be educated, led and transformed into Socialism, but it can not be

driven, lured or bulldozed into it. The Socialist conception of the world process is evolutionary, not cataclysmic. Socialism has come to build, not to destroy. This accepted position of the modern Socialist movement is, however, not to be taken as an assurance or prediction that the Socialist victory will in all cases come about by orderly and peaceful methods, and will not be accompanied by violence. It may well happen that the classes in power here or there will refuse to yield the control of the government to the working class even after a legitimate political victory. In that case a violent conflict will necessarily result, as it did under somewhat similar circumstances in 1861. But such spectacular and sanguinary outbreaks, which sometimes accompany radical economic and political changes, are purely incidental—they do not make the social transformation. Thus in England the revolution, which transferred the actual control of the country from the nobility to the capitalists, was accomplished by gradual and peaceful stages, without violence or bloodshed. In France the same process culminated in the ferocious fights of the Great Revolution of 1789. But who will say that the transition in England was less thorough and radical than in France? As a matter of fact, street fights do not make a social revolution any more than fire-crackers make the Fourth of July.

It is sometimes helpful to elucidate an abstract principle by a concrete and simple example. The manner in which the present order is to change into Socialism

may be illustrated by the familiar process of chicken-hatching.

A normal chicken egg will be converted into a live chicken if kept twenty-one days in a temperature of $98\frac{1}{2}$ degrees.

Now observe some of the most striking phases of the process.

An egg is entirely and radically different from a chicken, in form and substance. Under ordinary circumstances, it can be readily determined whether an object is the one or the other. But after the egg has passed a few days in the life-producing temperature radiating from the hatching hen, its identity is no longer so clear. The embryo of the chicken may be discerned in the contents of the egg. And every day thereafter the substance of the egg continues changing—every day it becomes a little less egg and a little more chicken, until on the last day nothing is left of the egg but the form, the substance inside is a live, complete and fully organized chicken. Similarly the feudal order of society is quite distinct from the capitalist order. Europe of the fifteenth century presents a system of unalloyed feudalism; Europe of the end of the eighteenth century is just as unmistakably capitalistic, but Europe of the seventeenth century is like the egg in the early periods of hatching—it represents a feudal form of government with a decided capitalist embryo inside of it. And so likewise the capitalist egg has been set to hatching generations ago, and today it contains a noticeable Socialist embryo notwith-

standing the deceiving appearance of the egg-shell.

Further: during the entire process of incubation the shell of the egg has remained intact. Every drop of its fluid contents has been changed into flesh, bones and feathers, but the shell has not been absorbed or modified by the process—it has obstinately persisted in holding within its grip the new substance instead of the old. Now for a loose and liquid egg, a hard shell is a very convenient cover, but it becomes rather a nuisance to a young, enthusiastic chick. As soon as the latter develops sufficient strength and sense, it just cracks the old shell from the inside. The shell breaks into a number of fragments with great noise, the rebellious chick jumps out, and to the superficial observer this act appears to be the revolution which has converted the egg into the chicken. As a matter of fact, however, the actual revolution has taken place in the gradual growth of the chicken embryo at the expense of the egg substance. The breaking of the shell was but a manifestation of the accomplishment of the more significant process inside. Had the shell been soft and yielding, it would not even have to be forcibly cracked. The street fight, barricades and armed conflicts which occasionally accompany a social revolution are the cracking of the superficial political shell—the revolutions themselves are slowly accomplished within the industrial substance of society.

The breaking of the shell becomes a useful and liberating act only when the chicken is fully developed within it. When that point is reached, the chicken

itself takes care of the shell. The hen has nothing to do with that part of the performance. It is her business to sit on the egg the full period of time required for hatching, to supply the proper heat and not to shirk her task for any period of time. Should the hen become impatient or get into her feathery head a syndicalist notion to "hasten the process," and should she attempt to break the shell before the time, she would only destroy the embryonic life of the chicken.

And finally, the process of incubation may be used to make clear the relation of the Socialist propaganda to the process of natural economic evolution. To hatch a chicken, the hen must have an egg, an object containing the germs of a chicken. No amount of hatching will turn a stone into a chicken. On the other hand, an egg will remain an egg forever unless deliberately taken by the hen into hatching. No system of society can be transformed into a Socialist commonwealth unless it has in it the germs of a Socialist order, and on the other hand, no system of society will grow into a Socialist state unless planfully directed to it. The capitalist state is the egg—the Socialists do the hatching!