

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE MOVEMENT.

**I**N this chapter we will endeavor to sum up the record of concrete achievements of the modern Socialist movement. The task presupposes a definite test by which the practical results of the Socialist propaganda may be ascertained and measured. What is that test?

The aim of Socialism is to reorganize modern society by abolishing private operation of business and introducing a system of socialized industries. This program extends to the entire civilized world. It may be realized in different places at different times, but in each case it will require for its realization the entire machinery of a complete and autonomous political government.

Neither a city administration nor a state government is capable of reorganizing the important national industries on a basis of collective ownership. A Socialist commonwealth can be established only through the co-operation of all departments of the national and state governments. In other words, the Socialists must be in full political control of the country before any part of their ultimate social ideal can be materialized.

It is singular how the non-Socialists and anti-Socialists alike fail to grasp this simple proposition. "Has Socialism ever been tried?" naïvely inquire the former, and "Socialism has failed wherever it has been put to a practical test," gravely assert the latter.

As a matter of fact, Socialism has never been "tried" and has never "failed," just as little as the twenty-first century has been "tried" or has "failed." Socialism represents an order of society which is expected to evolve from the present order. It is an anticipated future phase of modern civilization, just as "capitalism" and "feudalism" represent the present and the past stages of that civilization.

Social systems cannot be had "on trial" or "on approval" like a pair of gloves, to be retained or rejected, depending on the satisfaction which they give or fail to give to the prospective user. Less advanced organizations of society grow into more advanced organizations when time and conditions are ripe for the change, just as youth grows into adolescence—without preliminary "samples" or "trials."

The test of the practical achievements of the Socialist movement is therefore not, whether Socialism has already been realized in parts or in spots, but whether the movement has made a substantial advance in the task of creating social and political conditions favorable to the introduction of the Socialist commonwealth.

A familiar page from the history of the United States will serve to illustrate the point.

The organized anti-slavery movement of this country dates back to the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when abolition societies were formed in Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, Connecticut, Virginia and New Jersey. The agitation assumed a more practical and direct aspect under the leadership of Garrison, about 1830, and thenceforth continued with growing intensity for a period of about thirty-five years. The abolitionists may be said to have gained control of the political machinery of the country with the first election of Lincoln in November, 1860. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued on January 1st, 1863. The political power of the anti-slavery forces became absolute upon the final surrender of the Confederate Army on April 9th, 1865, and the institution of slavery was definitely and completely banished from the entire territory of the United States by an amendment to the Constitution on the 18th of December of the same year.

Assume, now, the condition of the abolitionist movement about the middle of the last century, and let us suppose that its followers are catechized on the subject of concrete achievements.

“Your movement is more than half a century old, and you have had about twenty years of organized and direct work. What practical results have you accomplished; what portion of the negro slaves in the South have you succeeded in freeing?”

We may imagine a question like this addressed to Wendell Phillips by an unbiased inquirer with a “prac-

tical turn of mind" and repeated with derision by the "safe, sane and conservative" pro-slavery advocate.

And we can hear Phillips' smiling answer:

"No, we have not yet emancipated the Southern negroes or any portion of them. When the hour shall come to abolish slavery, we will abolish it all, and in the meantime we have made a few big strides towards that goal. Since the beginning of the abolition movement we have gained some notable political victories, such as the Missouri Compromise and the admission of California as a free state. But we have gained vastly more in educating the public mind and arousing the public conscience to the realization of the evils of slavery, and the creation and growth of a strong organized force to battle for the abolition of that evil. Less than fifteen years ago the abolitionists were decried by the press and church as enemies of society, criminals, heretics and free-lovers, and all good people held them in horror; to-day, large sections of the enlightened public begin to feel that our aim is pure and good and they turn a sympathetic ear to us. Thirteen years ago Elijah P. Lovejoy was mobbed and killed for denouncing the brutal burning of a negro slave, and William Lloyd Garrison was dragged by a rope, half naked, through the streets of Boston; to-day the leaders of our movement can freely write and speak their thoughts. Respectable publications will report their utterances without distorting them, and well-behaved audiences will listen to them attentively and thoughtfully.

"Ten years ago we formed the Liberty Party and polled but 7,059 votes in the whole country; two years ago our Free-Soil Party received almost three hundred thousand votes.

"We have overcome many obstacles in the path of our movement and have created many conditions favorable to the ultimate triumph of our cause. These are the concrete and practical achievements of our agitation."

It takes but little imagination to translate the assumed colloquy into modern terms and to apply the abolitionist argument to the present-day Socialist movement.

The concrete and conscious efforts to pave the way for the introduction of a Socialist régime may be summarized under the following three main heads:

1. The enactment of such social reforms as tend to facilitate the transition from capitalism to Socialism.
2. The creation of a sympathetic public attitude towards the Socialist aim and program.
3. The organization of a body of persons, sufficiently numerous, intelligent and trained to accomplish the practical task of social transformation.

The extent to which these tasks have been accomplished determines the measure of practical success of the Socialist propaganda.

Under the head of "socialistic" reforms we must include all modern legislation, directly or indirectly inspired by Socialist activities, and having for its ob-

ject the betterment of the economic condition of the workers or the increase of their social and political strength. But few national reforms of this description are directly traceable to Socialist initiative in this or in any other country. It must be borne in mind that Socialism is, on the whole, a very recent factor in the politics of modern nations. In Germany, the Social Democratic Party has been represented in Parliament about forty-five years, but in all other countries the first appearance of Socialism on the political arena does not date back more than twenty or twenty-five years. In the United States the Socialist representation in Congress is limited to the one term of Victor L. Berger (1911-1913). While the Socialists have representation in almost every Parliament of Europe, and in many instances form strong groups in them, they nevertheless are in the minority in each case. In most European Parliaments a fixed and rather large number of seconders is required before a proposed measure can be considered by the house. The Socialist parliamentary groups in these countries have until recent years rarely been strong enough to comply with such requirements, and their practical activities were thus of necessity limited to the support or opposition of measures introduced by the government or by other parties. But with all these handicaps, the Socialist work in national law-giving bodies is not devoid of direct and important results. The Social Democratic Party of Germany boasts of a large number of reform measures, principally in the field

of workmen's state insurance, factory laws and taxation, which have been enacted through its direct initiative. In France the Socialist deputies have secured the passage of laws reducing the hours of labor of government employees, extending the powers of municipal administration and improving the system of state accident insurance and old-age pensions. In Denmark the Socialist representatives in Parliament have caused the adoption of a system by which the labor unions receive government subsidies for their unemployed members. In Austria, Sweden and Norway, the Socialist parties have been largely instrumental in extending the popular suffrage, and in Italy, Belgium and Switzerland, they have succeeded in forcing the adoption of substantial reform measures of various characters.

But more important than the achievements in the domain of national legislation have been the practical results of local Socialist politics. This is quite natural. While the Socialists so far constitute only small minorities in the national councils of the world, they have already succeeded in securing full control of numerous cities and towns in all modern countries. In Germany, France and Italy the Socialist municipalities count by the hundreds. Austria, Belgium, Holland and the Scandinavian countries likewise contain large numbers of cities, towns and villages fully controlled by the Socialists, and no less than two thousand municipal councils in Europe have Socialist representation of varying degrees of strength. Even in



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the United States, in which the political career of Socialism is practically in its infancy, the Socialist Party is in control of more than fifty cities and towns, and has elected about one thousand public officials to local offices.

In the cities in which the Socialists have been in power they have introduced such reform measures as were feasible within the restricted scope and powers of municipal governments. The reforms do not constitute Socialism or even an earnest of Socialism, but they are measures based on the recognition of the social obligations of the community towards the citizen, the new spirit in politics for which Socialism is largely responsible.

In the conventional political conception a municipal corporation is first of all a business concern, instituted and maintained for the purpose of administering the corporate property of the city. Hence the slogan of all municipal reform movements of the middle class is invariably "a clean, honest, business-like administration." The Socialists, on the other hand, emphasize the social functions of the municipality; the education, health and social welfare of its inhabitants.

A typical Socialist city begins its reforms with the child, the bearer of the community's future. A Socialist municipality almost invariably takes care of its working women during the period of confinement by providing free maternity hospitals with proper medical attendance. When the mother is ready to return

to work, the city continues to exercise a watchful and tender oversight of the child. Free municipal day nurseries, kindergartens, primary schools and schools for higher industries succeed each other in the task of rearing the child into healthful and enlightened manhood or womanhood. In most cases the city provides for its needy children not only free instruction, but also medical care, and even food and clothing. Seaside colonies and summer outings for all poor school children are common features in connection with the public school systems in Socialist cities.

Nor do the educational activities of Socialist municipalities end with the child. The cultivation of the fine arts and the dissemination of popular science among the adult workers, through the medium of municipal theatres, free concerts, reading-rooms and public lectures are quite usual in Socialist city administration.

Next to the all-important subject of education, the Socialists bestow their greatest care on the problems of public health.

Whenever a city under Socialist control contains slums or abnormally congested districts, the administration seeks to relieve the condition by the building of municipal dwelling-houses and by increasing the number of parks and playgrounds. Municipal bath-houses, disinfecting plants, hospitals and dispensaries are established wherever practicable and physicians and nurses are placed at the service of the poor free of charge.

The Socialist city administrations everywhere have sought to enlarge the scope of public assistance to the needy members of the community and to remove the sting of charity from such assistance. The poor are the victims of our social system. They have been wronged by society and the community owes them an honorable reparation. Hence the support given by the Socialist municipalities is more in the nature of pensions than alms. Municipal bakeries, kitchens and groceries, selling their products at cost, or giving them away, are favorite institutions in Socialist city administrations.

The Socialist municipalities seek to be model employers and invariably reduce the hours of work and increase the wages of the municipal employees. With all this, they are rarely extravagant in their expenditures, and their finances are, as a rule, in better order than those of the capitalist-governed cities. The increased expenditures which the many new activities involve are made up by economies in the administration of business, elimination of graft, and by forcing the wealthy citizens to pay their just shares of the taxes. The general spirit of social service and civic betterment, which is beginning to pervade the administration of cities in all progressive countries of the world, is largely due to the Socialist example. Even in the United States, Milwaukee, Schenectady and Berkeley have established standards of municipal administration, which are rapidly beginning to force other cities into the path of social progress.

These, then, are the most conspicuous of the "direct" political achievements of Socialism. They constitute a distinct social advance, although they are not revolutionary or epoch-making in character. Far more significant than the direct results are the numerous measures of social legislation which have within the last generation been enacted by the law-giving bodies of almost all civilized countries, as the indirect but nevertheless legitimate results of the Socialist propaganda.

Such measures of social reform are, as a rule, originally formulated by the Socialist parties on radical and thoroughgoing lines. They become the object of a persistent and widespread propaganda, and finally they acquire the force of popular demands. At this stage the "progressive" and sometimes even the "conservative" statesmen of the dominant political parties begin to realize the political significance of the proposed measure. The *Vox Populi* means votes on election day, and the shrewd leaders of the old parties are quite willing to make an occasional concession to "social justice" in order to maintain or to gain political power. A classical example of such statesmanship may be found in the very recent political history of our country. The father and leader of the new Progressive Party is on record with one of the most violent and abusive diatribes against Socialism ever perpetrated in American journalism. By the vagaries of the political chess game he suddenly found himself deprived of the support of the power-

ful political organization which he had but recently controlled. A new party and a new political movement had to be formed in order to preserve for him a measure of political power. Since it could not be a party of the old-type stalwart politicians, it had to be a party of the people, opposed to the rule of bossism and privilege, advocating popular measures and preaching the gospel of social progress. The Progressive Party accordingly ransacked all progressive movements of the time, and from each it took the most popular planks. And the vast majority of such planks was naturally found in the platform of the most radical political organization, the Socialist Party. The platform of the Progressive Party teems with "principles" and "issues" inspired by the Socialist program.

Whether the Progressive Party will some time hold the reins of government of the country, or whether it will ultimately dissolve into its constituent incongruous elements and vanish, as so many American reform movements have done in the past, its career is sure to leave a definite imprint on the political life of the nation. The radical slogans and watchwords which it has cast into the broad masses of the people are sure to create a social flame beyond the power of any politician to extinguish. The measures of "social justice" with which the Progressives are toying are taken in earnest by millions of citizens. Hereafter they will be inevitable "issues" in our political campaigns. Other political parties will be driven

to adopt some of them, and finally they will force their way to the statute books of the country.

Another motive for the enactment of socialistic measures is frequently found in the desire to palliate or destroy the effectiveness of the Socialist propaganda.

When the Socialist movement in any country assumes such dimensions as to become menacing to the dominant classes, the latter frequently conceive the idea of checking its growth by making concessions to the "discontented" masses, and "thus stealing the Socialist thunder."

Thus Prince Bismarck, when he first introduced into the German Diet his broad program of social reform, including the revolutionary principles of government insurance of the workers against sickness, accidents, invalidity and old age, frankly avowed that the primary object of the measure was to avert a popular revolution. The same considerations hold good for all other countries, and the appearance of the Socialist movement is invariably accompanied by an era of legislative social reform. In England the advent of the semi-socialist Labor Party in Parliament was followed by the old-age pension system, the trade-dispute act and by the more recent comprehensive social reforms of Lloyd George. The United States has for decades been the most backward country in the domain of social legislation, but the last few years have developed a strong tendency for radical social reform, and naturally the Socialist move-

ment in America has begun to acquire political significance at about the same time.

Experience has demonstrated that the efforts to forestall or check the growth of Socialism by legislative concessions, never succeed. The concessions are necessarily half-hearted, and while the reform measures thus enacted are often substantial advances in the path of social progress, they always fall far short of the radical demands as originally formulated by the Socialists. The ruling classes cannot be expected to lay down all or even the most substantial of their privileges by voluntary legislative enactments. Whatever concessions they make to the workers merely touch the surface of the evils of capitalist exploitation. The mainspring of these evils is bound to remain intact, and popular suffering and social injustice are bound to continue so long as the basis of the present social system, the private ownership of industries, persists.

When one social evil is cured or partly cured, the Socialists advance to the next and more vital problem. They never run short of demands for reform measures, and they can formulate them more rapidly and copiously than the other political parties can "steal" them. The Socialists do not copyright their platform planks. They are well contented to have them plagiarized and disseminated.

The true task of Socialism, the work of rebuilding the economic and political structure of modern society on the lines of the ultimate Socialist program, will

begin only when the Socialists have acquired full political control of the government, and in the meantime they are contented with the rôle of torch-bearers of the new civilization, always formulating larger social claims, always forcing the next step in social progress. The concrete reforms which the organized Socialist movement has thus indirectly gained and is still constantly gaining by its mere existence and growth, are probably more numerous and substantial than the actual achievements of all so-called "practical" reform movements combined.

Still more significant for the prospects of the movement are the effects of the Socialist propaganda upon the contemporary public mind. In almost all countries of Europe the Socialist movement has experienced three distinct phases of development. The first is one of general ridicule, which manifests itself in grotesque caricaturing of its aims and character. This phase is invariably succeeded by an era of fierce attacks and denunciations from all established organs of public expression, as a rule accompanied by rigid government persecution. This era represents the attempt to stamp out Socialism by brutal force,—the vain attempt which has met every historical movement for a new order, and which has always served to vitalize, cement and strengthen such movements.

When the Socialist movement has survived both ridicule and persecution, and has demonstrated its determination and capacity to stay and to grow, it enters upon the third stage of its existence, that of



being "respected." By this expression it is not intended to convey the idea that the Socialist movement ever has reached the point of becoming acceptable or even sufferable to the privileged classes. It will never reach that point so long as it retains its principal and most vital object—the abolition of all class privileges.

The ruling classes are probably more hostile to the Socialists now than they were during the earlier and weaker stages of the movement. But it is the hatred of an enemy facing a formidable adversary, a hatred mingled with respect, and often counseling concessions rather than courting war.

And side by side with the privileged classes, great in power, but few in numbers, there are the large and somewhat vague strata of society, generally styled the "middle" classes, and the still larger and more definite classes of wage-workers of all types.

The middle classes, who reap but slight benefits from the present order and are not bound to it by ties of privilege and wealth, begin to see in the promises of Socialism a possible solution of their ever-growing economic problems. They develop a more serious and sympathetic understanding for the humanitarian ideals of the new social creed, and many of their number finish by embracing it unreservedly.

The working classes are the most direct beneficiaries of the proposed Socialist system. As far as they are concerned, an understanding of the Socialist doctrine is practically equivalent to its acceptance. That

understanding has been brought home to millions of them within the last two or three decades of Socialist propaganda, and millions of them have enlisted under the banner of international Socialism.

Socialism has become one of the great world-powers of modern times. In the most advanced countries of Europe the governments shape their policies with special reference to the probable effect on the Socialist movement. Chancellor von Bülow has publicly admitted that fact for Germany; and France, England and Italy have repeatedly made efforts to induce the Socialist parties to assume active participation in the government by offering cabinet positions to their representatives. One of the most interesting episodes serving to demonstrate the political strength of the international Socialist movement occurred but a short time ago, at the outbreak of the Italian-Turkish war, when the prime minister of Turkey officially submitted a memorial to the International Socialist Bureau at Brussels, complaining of the arbitrary and barbarous procedure by which the Italian government forced the war, and asking for the intervention of the Socialists in behalf of his outraged country. As a matter of fact, the Socialist movement has prevented more than one threatened war within the last decade. It is one of the most powerful modern factors for peace between the nations of Europe.

But the most vital and direct test of the practical results of the Socialist activities is their effect on the Socialist organizations. Preparatory reform meas-

ures and a favorable state of the public mind create the necessary atmosphere and environment for the introduction of a new and radical social order, but the concrete task of ushering in such an order must be accomplished by an organized force, and the larger and better organized that force, the sooner will the change come and the more thorough and lasting will it be.

By the middle of the last century Socialism was confined to a small group of individuals and represented nothing more than an abstract school of unpopular social philosophy. To-day the Socialist movement has become a recognized factor in the public life of at least twenty-six modern nations. In 1867 the total number of Socialist votes in the world was about 30,000. To-day it exceeds ten million. The Socialist movement is thoroughly organized, more so than any other movement in our days or in the past. In each country the Socialists constitute a party, based on dues-paying, active and permanent membership. All Socialist parties of the world are in turn leagued together as one great organization. Every three years they assemble in international congress for joint deliberation and action, and they maintain at all times an International Socialist Bureau, composed of representatives of all national Socialist parties, meeting in periodical sessions, and transacting business through the medium of a local executive committee and a permanent secretary. The International Organization of Socialism can to-day

mobilize a larger force than any government in the world.

The Socialist organization is solid because it is not a sporadic creation, but the result of a process of steady, regular and legitimate growth. It is reliable because it is composed of men and women who have enlisted in the cause voluntarily and are attached to it by indestructible ties of conviction and hope. It is well trained and disciplined by that mutual training and self-imposed discipline which alone can be counted on in an emergency. The Socialist organization is supported by all other armies of organized labor. The trade-unionists of the world, about as large in number as the Socialist voters and wielding a tremendous economic power, and the co-operative movement numbering millions of workers and representing huge material wealth, are, with few exceptions, solidly lined up behind the Socialist movement, acting in accord with it on all questions of great public importance.

It is this world-wide organized force, this growing international army of the Socialist warfare, which constitutes the most concrete and most promising achievement of the Socialist propaganda.