

CHAPTER II

POLITICS AND BUSINESS

THERE are roughly three points of view in the social question: that of the employer, that of the laborer, and that of the public which includes them both. "Social politics" takes for granted that the social welfare is above either of these partial interests. It is politics of the common good rather than that of any class or party. Into it has entered all those regulative measures which extend and adapt what was first called factory legislation.

In no country of the first rank is this legislation so weak as in the United States. Nowhere is there such fatal lack of unity, and nowhere is it so easy to discredit sound legislative proposals by the fear that local business will suffer. This half paralysis of legislation that is really social; that guards labor as carefully as it guards capital, is the more unhappy in its results because large commercial interests never used the government for its private ends with more unconcealed audacity than among ourselves. Here, too, the laborer is learning the uses to which government and politics may be put. Looking to the city and government for help has been taught to the common people by the most successful business men in this country.

Our magnates of industry have not preached pater-

nalism, but, in season and out of season, they have practised it. They have practised it so long and so openly, and with such conspicuous profit to themselves, that it is grotesque drollery for them to cry out against paternal legislation. They have not merely looked to the government to assist their enterprises, they have taken possession of it. Hat in hand, they have begged with such importunity that the law-making power, federal, state, and municipal, seems to have been looked upon as a private preserve. Yet these who discovered paternalism and reduced it to a political art and method, never fail to raise the alarm when the humbler classes ask legislative aid of city or state. No lackey was ever more subservient to his master than Pennsylvania to its railroads, or than the state of California to the Southern Pacific. These corporations have owned the states, as the landlords in England owned the rotten boroughs before the reform. Does it lack any element of the comic to hear, a few years since, a president of that California corporation censure the "dangerous tendency of crying out to the government for aid"? What past master of the art of a triumphant paternalism in the West could for a moment match this gentleman? The East and Middle West are filled with his peers, who have given object lessons in paternalism to the masses, so continuous and so convincing that they would be dullards if they did not at last profit by their drill-masters' example.

A specific and whimsical illustration of this comes again from the hard-coal region in which Pennsylvania republicans have preached the doctrines of

protection. "Give us the fenced security of the tariff, shut off foreign competition with our own products, and then will it be well with our workmen, then shall they delight in steady work and high wages." With this fair promise on the lips, what do they forthwith proceed to do? With their own manufacturing products hedged about, with their own interests protected, they proceed, as if for the gayety of nations, to open every flood-gate for low-class foreign immigration to keep down the price of what the workmen have to sell, their daily labor. This product of life tissue shall forsooth have no protection. "We, the masters, will have it for our wares, but our laborers for their wares shall not have it."

In that unhappy anthracite country the employers will tell you openly and with unconscious bravado, that they must get in cheaper and cheaper labor to keep wages down, else they could make no money.

These realists of paternalism are among the leading causes of populist and socialist books. The Bel-lamys are at most a foot-note on their ampler page. If paternalism is growing, we at least know where thanks primarily are due.

The practical obverse of this paternalism is the socialistic sentiment among the working classes, which strengthens day by day for many reasons, but for no reason just now more than this: the refusal of so many quasi-public corporations to accept proper social control. They refuse in spite of the fact that they have received, direct from the hand of the public, the chief strategic advantages which secure their best business gains.

There are few sources of socialistic unrest so open

and prolific as the check which the commercially powerful put upon legislation that is disinterested, that is social in its proper sense. Interests that will prevent an income tax and use a high tariff to augment the privileges, not of struggling industries, but of the most masterful business corporations in the world, breed discontent, and then turn it straight toward the most risky and premature forms of socialism.

A single illustration may show what is meant by the sure coming of these questions into the field of politics, under the pressure of social unrest. We are grossly behind most civilized people in our entire treatment of industrial accidents. It is immediately possible to remove the most flagrant of these injustices by extending legal regulation based on the most definite practical experience of at least four other countries. These humane provisions are now defeated among us by narrow business interests. The federal government is powerless, and the separate states unwilling to give an advantage to a competing state. When the miners of Pennsylvania try to get the most elementary Employers' Liability Act, they are told before a legislative committee that it will harm local industry. The recent attempts to improve the law in New York were met by the objection that it would drive business into New Jersey.

The penalty that we shall pay for these defeats and delays is almost certain to be an unseasonable demand in this country for types of socialistic legislation for which we are not equipped. Our obdurate refusal to organize proper compensation acts for the victims of industrial injuries will soon raise the serious cry in

our midst for state pensions. It is safe to predict that the next considerable business depression will raise the issue of "old age pensions." Two influences will hasten this issue: (1) the unjust and bungling character of our present laws for indemnifying accidents, and (2) the rapidity with which men still in middle life are set aside in favor of young men in many of the greatest industries. (In the chapter on Machinery the fact will be considered with proof and more detail.) The man of fifty, if displaced in time of prosperity, may find employment, but the moment the demand for labor is arrested, these evils will show themselves in every industrial city in the United States. No people ever mismanaged government pensions with that headlong and promiscuous wastefulness which has been the humiliation of our system since the Civil War. Our wealth has been such that the good-natured extravagance has not despoiled us; but to arrange old age pensions for workingmen, with a hundredth part of the recklessness that has marked our pensioning of soldiers, would bankrupt any workingmen's pension scheme ever devised.

We have not yet won the administrative habits that make this vast and delicate responsibility safe. Yet the premature proposal will be thrust upon us all the more impetuously, because we refuse to take the first clear steps to do justly through more adequate compensation acts. The best lesson England has to teach us in the social question is the steadying and wholesome reaction of her progressive factory legislation upon her spirit of industrial unrest. This whole body of regulative measures has saved her from a revolution; it has saved her from any violent form of socialism;

tempering this sect so that socialist demands in that country are merely the frontier requisitions of her advanced politics.¹

A coal operator, at first friendly to the good work of the Civic Federation, turned later into the most sarcastic critic, because "the meddling of that body of theorists brought politics into our business." "No array of bigwigs," he said, "shall help us run our business by the help of politics." He insisted that the trade unions could have been beaten easily enough but for the impertinence of this political meddling.

It is true that the political situation of the moment was used to win that miners' strike of 1900. It is as true that business administration would be appallingly embarrassed if, in every row between capital and labor, hopeful appeal could be made to the politician. Yet this formidable perplexity has at last been reached in the United States. Politics, in its proper and larger definition, will more and more interfere with certain forms of business. When the public is disturbed *enough* by strike disorders, it will interfere politically. The

¹ For an illustration let the reader turn to Engels's powerful description, "The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844." If we except the lurid passages in Carlyle's "Past and Present" and "Later-Day Pamphlets," and many of the notes in Marx's "Capital," there is no such terrible arraignment of conditions among the laboring classes as this book contains. It is a mass of documentary testimony of the extensive and intensive misery of the laboring classes generally; but a misery which has been immeasurably lessened. Charles Kingsley's stormy resentment against society had its kindling from just such sources as these. Not twenty years after he had written "his problem story," "Yeast," the improvement among the workingmen had been so great that in the fourth edition of this volume the author states frankly how hopeful a change has taken place.

kind of organization which capital on the one side and labor on the other has now taken on, renders this inevitable. Capital is now centralized in producing and distributing certain products that are in the widest and most common use, like iron, steel, sugar, meat, and coal. The very definiteness and magnitude of the organization make it an easy mark for approval or disapproval. If the consumer thinks himself aggrieved, he sees clearly the source of his irritation. There may be wholly legitimate economic causes for the present rise of beef, but no authoritative and disinterested statement of this has been made to the public, and thus the cry rises in every part of the country that the "government look into the beef trust," that we have in a word political interference.

To this same end works the increasing organization of labor. The very mass and extent of this organization makes the ignoring of it by the politician impossible, if it actively court such recognition. It is not necessary that labor should try to form an independent party. Its power may prove more effective if its growing political strength is used to extort from either Democrats or Republicans every advantage it can gain. Within fifteen years, in countries like Switzerland, Belgium, and France, labor organization has compelled a kind of systematic mixing of governments in industrial affairs. It is but a few years since a French premier contemptuously refused to entertain the proposition of government interference with a strike. He was forced to yield, and from that day to this politics has played an increasing part in those special labor contests that bring out the antagonisms

between political individualism and the ideals of modern collectivism.¹

As late as 1882, when they were discussing in France whether the liberty of association should be granted to trade unions, Léon Say thought the social question a fad upon which serious statesmen should waste no time. The last prime minister, Waldeck-Rousseau, set high value upon Monsieur Say's opinion, following it sedulously, until the socialist vote drove him to a policy which he pronounced infamous as late as 1894. In Roanne, in 1895, he told his hearers of the social destruction threatened by collectivism, "les ruines qu'il peut faire,"² and finally before the republican club, after the fall of the Méline ministry, Waldeck-Rousseau warned the party forces against the first step of compromise with socialists.

Is not this the mission of le Grand Cercle republicain, it was asked, to prevent every affiliation with collectivist despoilers, and to hold fast republican principles in their integrity? It has never ceased to excite merriment among his enemies that, once in power, this strong leader should so soon eat his own words, hasten to the socialists for help, and appoint one of their best-known leaders, Monsieur Millerand, as his minister of commerce. No one believes that the private opinions of Waldeck-Rousseau upon the merits of the collectivist programme had been transformed. His change of front was forced by the unexpected rise of a new party in French politics. The socialist trade union had a membership, in 1890, of

¹ President Loubet was recently as busily engaged in trying to settle a strike as President Roosevelt.

² Discours le 15 novembre.

less than 140,000, in 1899 they numbered nearly 500,000. In 1884 there were not 100 of these associations in all France, in 1890 there were 1006, in 1899, 2685.¹ Forty of these unions have their own periodicals, and nearly 600 have established libraries. Although these unions represent but half the socialist strength of the country, their clubs are so organized in hundreds of French cities that they exercise an influence which no party manager can now ignore.

The president of the Chamber of Deputies, Monsieur Deschanel, is reported to have said, "I owe my position chiefly to the fact that I had given a dozen years' hard study to industrial and economic problems, under the firm conviction that the social question is the ruling issue of our time."

After two speeches² delivered in 1894, it appears to have been admitted in the Deputies that he was easily the most competent member to cope with the new party. He openly admits that socialism represents a powerful, serious, and growing influence, which politics must more and more take into account. Monsieur Deschanel is, perhaps, more critical of political *laissez-faire* than he is of collectivism. State intervention in behalf of the laborer (not merely of the woman and child, but of the man) he accepts as a principle that is to have a far wider application. He believes that such interference may become national on a far larger scale. He holds that *la grande industrie* has created a new form of pauperism: — "a engendré par les chômages une forme nouvelle de pau-

¹ *L'Annuaire des Syndicats Professionnels pour 1900.*

² "Replique à Messieurs Millerand et Jaurès" and "Le Système Collectiviste."

périsme." He recognizes, what his older colleagues would not see, that the trade union has become a permanent part of our industrial life, and should be welcomed. He calls it the "cellule de l'organisation nouvelle du travail." He admits every abuse that is laid at its doors, but insists that with a bold and generous treatment the trade union will become a powerful and conservative influence: — "deviendra, entre des mains plus exercées, un puissant levier de progrès et de justice sociale."¹

That socialism—as curse or blessing—might prove to be the great fact of the twentieth century, has long been felt by men of philosophic penetration who wrote in the spirit of critical observers. I select those only who looked at this oncoming event with pronounced aversion, as their testimony will carry more weight. Two French writers of such eminence as Edmond Scherer and De Vogüé are both haunted by the assurance that socialism is creeping upon us like a great shadow. Nearly twenty years ago Senator Scherer expressed deep repugnance to socialism, but wrote, "all signs point to the steady spread of socialism within a future that we may all live to see."²

In his acute though sombre study of race struggles Professor Pearson, out of a singularly large experience in England and Australia, expresses a like opinion. This same view appears in the more pre-

¹ "La Question Sociale et Le Socialisme;" Discours prononcé à Carmaux le 27 décembre, 1896.

² "La République démocratique, je ne puis m'empêcher de la croire tend au nivellement des fortunes, elle est condamnée à faire l'épreuve du communisme, et la seule chose que nous ayons à nous demander c'est ce qu'il faut attendre de cette tentative."—Edmond Scherer, "La Démocratie et La France," 1883, p. 63.

tentious and widely read book of Benjamin Kidd,¹ and now Edward Dicey of Oxford, in a dirge at the grave of his own liberal party, sees the gloomy apparition of socialism rising on the horizon.

It is the politics of this party, which Professor Dicey pronounces dead in England, that has been a scornful opponent of socialism. More than any other, it came to be the party of modern capitalism. Yet while the strength of capitalism is unabated, this party in country after country has suffered crushing defeats. In the two countries where socialism has won the most signal victories, Belgium and Germany, this party of the "politics of the great industries" has almost ceased to exist. No modern event of greater consequence has happened in Europe than the swift decay of what is known as political liberalism. When Professor Dicey connects the fall of his party with the rise of socialism, he indicates the chief event with which twentieth-century politics will be concerned. This fact cannot be understood apart from its relation to the industrial forces of our time.

The great market, banking, industrial, and factory

¹ Mr. Kidd speaks of "the only social doctrines current in the advanced societies of to-day, which have the assent of reason, for the masses are the doctrines of socialism." In his latest book, "Western Civilization," Mr. Kidd brings the ideals of politics and economics into one category: "As in politics the movement has been toward equal political rights, so in economics it is now a movement toward equality of economic opportunity." He quotes Professor Sidgwick's ethical postulate, "that the distribution of wealth in a well-ordered state should aim at realizing political justice." This conscious identifying of political and industrial ideals is a dangerous ferment for certain vested interests. Let it become familiar to the common thought, and some of our sturdiest formulas on "liberty," "property," "rights," must be restated.

centres have created a politics which reflects what was believed to be their interest. Every successive industrial type has had its own political form. No one doubts that the politics peculiar to the Southern states before the Civil War was made chiefly by the kind of business carried on there by slaves.

There was in England a landlord politics that carried all before it until the midland manufacturing cities grew powerful enough to force the landlords to admit to Parliament those who represented the new interests of the mill and factory towns. If a few of the largest businesses of Pennsylvania — transportation, iron, and mining — were grouped together, and then their history faithfully told, we should know the origin and character of a large part of Pennsylvania politics. The history of the Boston and Maine Railroad in New Hampshire would be at the same time the mere record of much contemporary politics in that state. Very nearly all that this railroad wanted has been recorded politically as the will of the people. Very little of what the people wanted has been so recorded, if the demands were thought to run counter to the interests of this corporation. The great business thus not only sets its stamp on politics, it is to a large extent its creator and controller.

To admit that political liberalism — the distinctive party of capitalism — has been routed in the most highly developed countries of Europe, is to admit that capitalism itself, as hitherto managed, is under criticism. This appears with still more significance as we note the tendency of commercial interests to unite those who have been heretofore in opposing political parties. In Belgium, where the social question has

become intense, thousands of business men, who were formerly liberals, now vote with the conservatives because business has been frightened by the rise of socialism. Even in our country the half-conscious socialism known as populism has so far developed as to drive the conservative and well-to-do democrats of the Cleveland, Whitney, and Olney type so close to the republican party, that much ingenuity is required to prove any important and lasting difference between the two traditional foes.

At the South, the banker, the manufacturer, the railroad man, now tell you with no hesitation that his democratic sympathies are gone, that his real interests are with the republicans. In Norfolk, Virginia, I was told by a man with generations of democratic traditions in his blood, "Practically every successful business man of my acquaintance would leave the democratic party if it were not for the abnormal situation which the negro question imposes upon us. The socialistic nonsense in the democratic party has shown thousands of men in the South that they do not belong among the democrats." Every mill and factory, every railroad and other large corporation, established at the South, will increase this political sympathy with "the party of great interests."

The analogy between our republican party and the dying liberalism of Europe is extremely imperfect unless the splendid origin of both parties is forgotten. There is far more truth than error in the analogy, if we have in view merely, what these parties finally came to be. The Belgian liberals, for instance, represented large capitalistic industries. They wanted to be left alone. They were solemn in their protests

against "interference," whether of state or the trade unions.

Only the ruins of this party are now left. Socialist aggression has driven the vested property interests into one common political alliance for self-defence. We are now entering into this same experience.

To the extent that the republican party is notoriously affiliated with leading business enterprises,—banking, transportation, and the great production,—to the extent that these enterprises are uniting men of both party traditions against a vague and fumbling socialism, the comparison holds good.

Discontent with the actual industrial order is now organized politically as it is in Europe, and every force active among us will add to its strength. Its beginnings are thus far very humble. Periods of unusual prosperity will hold it in check, but at each collapse of the business boom this new idea will but fasten the more strongly upon the imagination and the purposes of multitudes of the American people.

Mr. Gladstone is quoted as saying that the chief event of his time was the increasing identification of politics with social questions. Eight years ago Lord Rosebery said, "I am certain that there is a party in this country, unnamed as yet, that is disconnected with any existing political organizations—a party that is inclined to say 'a plague on both your houses, a plague on all your politics, a plague on all your unending discussions that yield so little fruit.'" (St. James's Hall, March 21, 1894.)¹

¹ "Now, I dare say the time may come—it may come sooner than some think—when the liberal party will be transformed or superseded by some new party."—John Morley, Newcastle, May 21, 1894.

The party is not yet formed, but if we may believe so acute and competent a scholar of world politics as Mr. Dicey, "liberalism" is a thing of the past and socialism a fatality of the future.

What is likely to strengthen this collectivist sympathy is the advent of the "trust." The process of consolidating large, separate concerns is easy to justify in theory and by analogies from economic development. It seems more than probable that these giant enterprises will eventually adjust themselves to the needs of a world-commerce. But meantime two eventful results cannot be averted. The trust is destined (1) to arouse and intensify socialistic sentiment among classes to which socialism has hitherto been an object of ridicule. Nothing can now prevent the development of a new habit of appealing to the state and government to extend its authority over these colossal undertakings.

The trust will (2) accustom the people to bring politics into the industrial field. The huge overcapitalization, the taking and giving of social privileges, the method of organization so exclusively from the stock exchange point of view, with its excesses of speculation, are all calculated to play, with disquieting effect, on the popular imagination. The incidental evils bound to follow these hurried aggregations of capital cannot quickly enough be brought under control. Long intervening years must pass before the trust can prove safe for the humbler class of investors. Popular approval will never be secured until these open and obvious advantages are assured. Capitalistic abuses have had one sure defence in the past

behind which the trust cannot hide itself. The public eye is fastened upon it by its very bigness.

It has never yet been possible to concentrate the critical discontent definitely enough upon commercial abuses. There has been no end of railing against the corporations, but the people have taken these charges very closely at their proper value. As long as the vilification of corporations is indiscriminate, the common sense of the people will discount it for the plain reason that thousands of corporations (like our New England mills and factories) are fairly law-abiding and bring benefits to millions of our inhabitants. They are known to be as free from evil practices as any phase of our institutional life. To lump these business organizations into one common object for cursing is not merely unwise, it is dangerous in that it muddles every issue upon which reform of real evils must depend. As long as obloquy is put upon corporations in general, the lawless ones are safe. Their percentage of the contumely is lightly borne.

With the advent of the "trust" a new stage in popular judgments has been reached. The old hesitation about fixing responsibilities for evils, real and supposed, will continue until business ills again beset us. In that stress, scores of the weaker combinations will collapse and even the strongest be hard driven to meet the responsibilities incurred by their monstrous capitalization. These days will be the days of reckoning for the capitalistic holders. There will be much unfairness in this popular judgment. The trust has come, upon the whole, as inevitably as the partnership came in its time, or as the corporation began to appear at the end of the eighteenth century.

Yet all that can be said for the "naturalness" of this trust evolution will not shield it from one outbreak of hostile censure. Thus far there has been a holding of the breath at the rapidity and magnitude of trust formation. The stupendous scale of it has impressed the imagination as no other event in our industrial history: methods, salaries, managers, promoters, all are thrust into such fierce light and prominence that popular attention will become very embarrassing in that less prosperous period when all the capitalized expectations have to be fulfilled. This element of conspicuousness ought, in theory, to sober those who conduct these enterprises. The very rights under which they do business are granted to them by the state. In season and out of season, they have told the public that the gathering of various firms and corporations into one unified association enabled them to make extraordinary economies by which the consumer must profit. Can we think that intelligent men will create these expectations and then anger the people by higher prices? If they prove unable to make economies that the public can share, their combination will be pronounced a failure; if they can make economies but refuse to share them in cheapened products, the public will be more critical still.

The most popular error, however, is to judge the trust on its business side alone. It has to undergo another ordeal before public opinion. The trust comes into the industrial struggle with privileges and powers greater than ever have been exercised in the world's commerce. To use these powers with such prudence and fairness as not to outrage the sentiment

of the community, will prove the severest test to which these combinations must submit. It is too soon to say what their influence is to be upon a great multitude of small independent business concerns. Is life to be made harder for these, or are they also to have some part in "the higher stage of evolution" which the trust is said to represent? That the trust will throw out of work armies of men, as we are often told, is probably untrue, but will it slowly put an army of the more modest independent men into dependent clerical positions? It may be said that this is unavoidable, that it is progress and in the long run socially best; but that it would create a new class of malcontents in American life is very certain.

The most concrete impulse that now favors socialism in this country is the inane purpose to deprive labor organizations of the full and complete rights that go with federated unionism. Capitalism claims and gets what it refuses to labor. One of the grantees in the business world, who has publicly insisted upon "the rights of labor to organize," was asked in my hearing if he were favorable to trade unionism. "Yes," he said, "I have always been its friend, but of course the union must be taught its proper place. It has nothing to do with the employer's business. If it dictates, it is out of its sphere. It ought to confine itself to mutual helpfulness, burial funds, and the like." Of this kind of good will to organized labor employers have abundance, yet it may conceal an absolute and settled aversion to every real object for which the trade union stands. This gentleman had an honest loathing for the actual trade union when it gained strength enough to offer

him the alternative of arbitration or of a strike. He had an imagined affection for a ladylike association which "knew its place," that is, which never questioned his own absolute dictatorship. He was fond of saying: "There is no place for arbitration in my works, because I pay all that the business will afford. If they ask me to arbitrate, it is like taking me by the throat. With a highwayman there can be no arbitration."

This is upon the whole the attitude of the business managers in four-fifths of our unionized industries. From the point of view of capitalist supremacy this attitude has one threatening feature.

This enmity of capital to the trade union is watched with glee by every intelligent socialist in our midst. Every union that is beaten or discouraged in its struggle is ripening fruit for socialism. We have pleased ourselves by repeating, parrotlike, "such socialism as we have in the United States is wholly of foreign origin." A few years ago this explanation accounted fairly well for the facts. No close observer can any longer consider it an explanation. The conditions out of which socialism grows are working with increasing power in our midst, and they do not conveniently select those only who speak broken English, or were bred among "the tyrannies of the old world." Let unionism receive from capital a severe and damaging blow, and socialism will bear henceforth, not a foreign but a distinctively American stamp.

This process has already begun. Strong trade-union cities, like Brockton and Haverhill in Massachusetts, to the general bewilderment, elect workingmen socialist mayors. Their hold is thus far slight. These

socialists were dropped after two years in office, but in both cities the sentiment which elected them is far stronger and more confident than in 1898-1899. In other manufacturing towns like Rockland, it becomes each year more aggressive. In 1902, it sends a third representative to the State House, while manufacturing cities in Plymouth County give an enormous vote for a socialist state senator.¹ Among the causes which have brought these changes is the purpose of employers to cripple the trade unions. It may be by forcing piece-work so that wages are kept low; or by introducing a new machine like the "laster" without consulting or propitiating the union whose wage scale is revolutionized by the new process. That which teaches a union that it cannot succeed as a union turns it toward socialism. In long strikes in towns like Marlboro and Brookfield strong unions are defeated. Hundreds of men leave these towns for shoe-centres like Brockton, where they are now voting the socialist ticket. The socialist mayor of this city tells me, "The men who come to us now from towns where they have been thoroughly whipped in a strike are among our most active working socialists." The bitterness engendered by this sense of defeat turned to politics, as it will throughout the whole country, if organization of labor is deprived of its rights.

When the socialist Chase was made mayor of Haverhill, the ablest local "capitalistic" paper made this comment:—

¹ As this goes to press, December 4th, the returns from Brockton show that with the reëlection of the socialist mayor by a strong majority, eight city councillors, three aldermen, and two members of the school board, all socialists, are also elected.

“Now that the municipal election of 1898 has passed into history, those who profess horror of socialistic teachings may with advantage to themselves and benefit to the community study the election returns with anxious solicitude. They will find therein food for thought. The vote of yesterday means far more than the bare figures indicate. It comes as a solemn warning that the people are dissatisfied with conditions which make for their political degradation; that they have grown impatient of low wages and lack of employment, and may be counted upon in the future to act independently of all political parties unless there be a change both of methods and of men in the legislative chambers of nation, state, and city. Is it any wonder these people have lost confidence in the honesty of those chosen to direct their affairs when they see piling up on every side immense aggregations of wealth which is used to control the necessities of life, while their daily wage grows smaller?”

These are puny beginnings. Our social democracy is still too much at sea to put before the people a clear and coherent statement of principles. These are, however, slowly taking shape, while the platform of our conventional politicians, like that of European liberalism, drifts year by year into phrasemaking that shows upon its face the fatal lack of great and positive purpose. The conventional politics has reached that first stage of decay — the apologetic and defensive attitude. The new politics of the social democracy has, at least, the spirit of positive and creative action.

As the attenuated difference between republican and “Cleveland democrat” disappears, conservative

and large property interests, careless of party traditions, will band together against this common foe. Our first need is to know how to meet the new occasions which this appeal to the state brings with it.

An attempt is made in the following chapters to throw light on the most important phases of the struggle upon which we are entering. I believe that recent developments of socialism and trade unionism in this country furnish all the guidance we require both as to temper and method of coping with them. Before passing to this more definite investigation of the socialist programme, certain preliminary inquiries must be made as to the nature of the "social question," and the real purpose of those who attack the present industrial order. Our first inquiry should be directed to the primary fact of discontent. No age ever had a social question apart from some deep undercurrent of exasperated sentiment against the prevailing social order. There is in our age no more "social question" than there is discontent with the kind of society in which we live. The extent and nature of this unrest is therefore our immediate concern.