

## CHAPTER XIX.

### PROGRESS OF SOCIALISM IN THE UNITED STATES.

What Herbert Spencer recognized so clearly many years ago is beginning to press itself upon the attention of the public in this country. Spencer called socialism "the coming slavery," and he saw events so shaping themselves that sooner or later the general public would be brought face to face with the momentous problem.

Where society is not divided into well defined classes socialism has but a slippery foothold. But where, as in Germany, the line is clearly drawn between the employing, the working and the governing classes, the conditions are favorable to its growth. It is a class struggle—the masses against the classes, and when class consciousness is aroused it is inevitable that those who have numbers on their side will in the fullness of time, for a longer or shorter period, become the governing power of the community. Whether they do this well or ill depends much upon previous education or lack of education, and the circumstances that unite them into a political power. The revolutions that have at times spread over Europe have always been poorly managed and grossly misgoverned, with impossible demands and impossible methods, so the failures only seem to have cemented faster present industrial conditions.

The socialistic propaganda looks to the wiping out of the employing class, and the elimination of rent, interest and profit. Land and machinery are to be made common property, and the workers themselves will control their own industries, and be their own

employers. Some advocate compensating the present owners of capitalized wealth, while others violently oppose any such thing. With the political power in their hands, it will be unnecessary, they say, to pay the capitalistic class for the wealth that by right belongs to the wage-working class, the socialists looking upon all wealth as stealings when not in the possession of the wage-working class. This change is to be accomplished by arousing wage receivers to their "class consciousness," when they are expected to vote and work together for their own redemption, and to accomplish legally their will through the changing of the laws governing property.

There will be then, as now, common wealth and private wealth, but the common wealth will go further than public parks, public schools, public water works, and public lighting plants, and will include all the machinery of production from the works belonging to the corporation turning out locomotives, or iron bridges, or stoves, or any other great utility, to hand-made products. Private wealth will consist of the earnings of labor when not used to produce more wealth. It will, as now, be under the personal control of its producer, but no one will be allowed to use it to employ others. Prof. George D. Herron puts it in this form:

Socialism bases itself upon the fundamental fact that those who live by selling their labor power to capital, must become class-conscious of the fact that they are the rightful owners and real producers of the earth, and this producing class must bravely and coherently set to work to achieve its own liberty from the capitalistic and labor-consuming system of industry.

He sees three socialistically inclined classes in the community, all working to the same end. These are the socialistic labor people, who have brought from Europe their ideas of the labor problem, but which must be molded anew to suit American conditions; the people who believe in individualism, and who see in socialism a larger field for individual activity, and

those who are striving to bring about a new religious movement and which is at one in the ends aimed at by economic socialism.

Rev. Nehemiah Boynton, in a sermon to workingmen, put into the mouth of socialists the expression: "Let us give to each according to his condition." The socialists say no such thing. The expression is thoroughly communistic, and is the keynote of the various religious societies who have established communities based on that interpretation of the New Testament where it records the fact that Christ's disciples "had all things in common." The socialistic shibboleth is: "To everyone according to his deeds," clearly implying that there are degrees of intelligence, of industry, and of human productivity in the creation of wealth.

Such a blunder as Dr. Boynton has made, in attempting to induce the industrious poor to attend a fashionable church, indicates that he should spend a few prayerful hours in reading up on the subject. And he might commence with Karl Marx, or any other good hater of the present system of distributing wealth.

The socialists are endeavoring to impress the wage-receiving class with the proposition that, only through the coercive powers of a strong government, can justice be obtained, but as a rule they are indefinite when it comes to details, and are not meeting with the success proportioned to their energy. The people see so many bad things in governments that they are justly suspicious of any scheme that depends for its success on more government. But as between the ministry and the socialists the actual wealth producers of the land are justly most suspicious of the pastors of wealthy church congregations who are supported by the very classes most benefited by our industrial maladjustments.

The priesthood have always upheld existing conditions, however bad for the mudsills of society, with suggestions of eternal damnation to those who strove to lighten industrial burdens or had the temerity to clank in public their industrial chains. Obedience to

superiors has generally been preached as a virtue, even when the superiors were devoid of all virtue. The king, the priest and the soldier, whether the system was slavery, serfdom or one founded on capitalistic production buttressed by land monopoly, have ever combined against the common people. Along in 1789 Rev. Townsend, who called himself "A well-wisher of mankind," ably defended the position of his class when he wrote a dissertation on England's proposed poor laws, claiming that any effort to help the poor tended to destroy God's purpose. Hunger, he insisted, should be permanent among the working classes. "It seems to be a law of nature," he wrote, "that the poor should be to a certain degree improvident, that there may be always some to fulfill the most servile, the most sordid and the most ignoble offices of the community. The stock of human happiness" (for his class) "is thereby increased, while the more delicate are relieved from drudgery."

The clergy were the firmest supporters of human slavery in the United States, and not until it was overthrown by conditions which they as a class had little to do in bringing to pass, did their pulpits resound with denunciations of this blot on nineteenth century civilization. They are now either silent or avowed supporters of this latest phase of human slavery seen in the stupendous accumulation of wealth through the wealth exploiting methods of the commercial world. Dr. Boynton himself will probably be one of the last men to stand for the equitable distribution of wealth among those who have produced it, for no more than the professors of colleges and universities sustained by contributions from the trust-fed classes, dare he denounce their methods and champion an adequate remedy. The laboring population as a class has no reason to feel grateful to the clergy for anything they have done to help overcome industrial oppression. Dr. Boynton must be given credit, however, for acknowl-

edging that in his opinion the laboring classes are not being paid all they earn.

It is interesting to watch the growth of the socialistic party as a political factor in the United States. Four times, now, they have had national tickets in the field, covering most of the states, but leaving great gaps in the country districts. Tabulated, it reads as follows:

Year.	Vote.	Year.	Vote.
1888.....	2,068	1896.....	36,564
1892.....	21,157	1900.....	129,042

The last vote was divided between two socialistic candidates, Debs getting 95,592, and Maloney 33,450. The split was only temporary, the factions having since united under the name "socialistic labor party."

The same slow growth followed the social democratic propaganda in Germany, but when once the party gained a foothold, there has never been an election in which they have not made substantial gains, though the districts are so gerrymandered there as to prevent the socialists showing much strength in the German parliament. The total vote, however, runs into the millions.

There have been splits, also, among the socialists of Europe. For years the "reds" and the "blacks" have quarreled over methods, though united on objects. But at the congress in Paris, in September, 1901, marked advance was made in reconciling these differences, and an international organization was re-established with its headquarters at Brussels. The congress recognized that the class struggles in which the proletariat was engaged "forbids all forms of alliance with any division whatsoever of the capitalist class," admitting, however, that there might be exceptional cases making such a coalition desirable.

Every time a great corporation launches itself upon the sea of commercialism, the socialist leans back in his chair and gravely says, "That is good." For it is

his belief that the concentration of business is going to make it much easier, in the near future, to take it out of the hands of a single corporation and nationalize it, than if it is split up into numerous enterprises each one with a number of supporters. So while this concentration has been proceeding with lightning speed, the socialist has not been one of those to waste his breath in denunciation.

Naturally, the socialist believes that labor is the source of all wealth, and for this he has the word of numerous political economists. But he sees, as does everybody else, that the workers do not enjoy the wealth they create in proportion to the exertion of the units, and not a few of them jump to the conclusion that the "grasping employer" is the source of all his misery. As the employer and the capitalist are to him one and the same, his aim is to destroy the power of capital, capitalists and capitalism to exploit labor, and so he calls for the socializing of land and all wealth used productively. It is to combat this socialistic doctrine as much as anything else that at an economic association convention in Detroit in 1901 a new system of political economy was advocated, based on the proposition that labor is not the source of all wealth, but that capital plays the principal part, and therefore is entitled to the lion's share of the joint product of labor and capital. But the socialist, as stubborn as ever, insists that capital does not even aid labor in the production of wealth, though to reach this conclusion he has to assume the position that capital is merely stored up labor, and the laborer is by right entitled to all his immediate and past labor produces. The new political economist, however, will have as difficult a task to prove that labor is not the source of all wealth as the socialists to make plain the proposition that capital is not an aid to labor in the production of wealth.

There is one particular kind of socialism in Detroit worth noting. It is sometimes called "Meiko Meyer"

socialism, because Mr. Meyer, a strong personality, is at the head of the movement. It is the most uncompromising lot of reformers before the public, vigorously opposing all ameliorative measures. And they are consistent from their standpoint, kicking against direct legislation, which includes the referendum and the initiative; denouncing the single tax on land values; ridiculing the trades union movement; and condemning long, loud and vigorously the attempts of the prohibitionists to stop the liquor traffic. The party sneers at the W. C. T. U. movement, insisting that all political reform parties but its own are enemies of the human race, and that every move of the leaders is either under the direct supervision of powerful interests who are manipulating things for their pecuniary benefit, or the leaders are poor dupes, which is a shade worse than being actual traitors. Like some religious enthusiasts, the Meiko Meyer socialists might be called "heresy hunters," for the members seem to pay more attention to those socialists who disagree with them on the proper way to push the propaganda than they do to the opponents of socialism itself. I have attended several meetings of this "party," and have listened to speechmaking by Meiko Meyer, Herman Richter, and U. Ulbricht, Jr., on the folly of championing any reforms in the political and industrial world.

So long as the people are satisfied with present conditions, these socialists feel assured that any effort to overthrow it will be opposed by the wage-receiving class itself. Therefore direct legislation, as Mr. Ulbricht puts it, "is a bad thing under present conditions, while it may be a good thing under socialism." It is bad because it will enable the masses to correct some of the social abuses of the capitalistic system. It will at least prevent the corrupt use of money with legislatures, for no one will pay to get on the statute books laws that may never go into effect.

This socialistic opposition to other reforms is on the

same line as opposition to direct legislation. The talks I attended showed the speakers generally ignorant of the far-reaching effect of the single tax on land values; yet they will have nothing to do with this fiscal reform, for fear it may give labor employment, or equitably distribute fiscal burdens in proportion to the benefits conferred by society. Mr. Richter probably correctly voiced the decidedly mistaken opinion of his companions when he said that the single tax would "enable monopolists to buy up the land and raise rents, and that therefore it would not only be no reform, but would be an actual detriment to wage-workers, by making harder the conditions under which they now exist." To be perfectly consistent, Mr. Richter should advocate the single tax, if he really believes it a bad thing for wage-workers, for then they would be willing, on his theory, to overthrow the present system of industry.

The land-holding class, whom Mr. Richter as well as Mr. Meyer classed as capitalists, though economically speaking they are not capitalists, but landlords, with power to exploit labor much greater and more far-reaching than those who put their wealth into the form of capital, consistently oppose the single tax. They instinctively know that it will put a stop to land speculation, at least, and make them either improve their holdings or sell to some one who will. So, here is seen this special brand of socialism and the speculators in the soil going hand in hand to prevent any improvement in the distribution of tax burdens.

Meiko Meyer is particularly severe in his criticism of "broad men." He looks upon them as danger signals, and their ideas and measures are to be avoided. "Broad men" are willing to accept anything making conditions less galling. They strive to raise wages, so that the wage-worker is satisfied with less than he is really entitled to. The only thing necessary, he insists, is to arouse the "class consciousness" of the masses, and then they will flock to the banner of socialism, and



capital, capitalists and capitalism will soon be things of the past. Wealth would be created with greater rapidity than ever, but the wealth-producing class would absorb it all, leaving capitalists as such to hustle for a living in some non-exploiting occupation.

It seems to me that these stiff-backed socialists, who walk so straight that they lean backwards, have closed their eyes to all the experiences of the world. Only step by step has the human race made advances. Whenever there has been an attempt to go ahead by leaps and bounds, there has been a reaction from which the people have been long in recovering. From slavery to serfdom, from serfdom to the present wage system, the masses have evolved naturally, and each step has been an improvement on the last. Whenever, as in the French revolution, and later in the revolution that swept over Europe in 1848, the leaders attempted at one bound to bring about exact justice to labor, there were dismal failures from which humanity has not recovered to this day. In England the wave of reform lapped the shores of that sea-girt isle in a more gentle manner, and the effect was to enable the masses there to make many gains denied their continental brothers. Not that economic conditions in Great Britain are perfect. But certainly the British workmen are not so poverty-stricken as are those who reach our shores from Europe and more especially from Italy and Poland. They work shorter hours, get more pay, and are enabled, through the blessings of free trade, to enjoy a greater variety of food at a less cost.

There are many defects in the present industrial system. Some of these relate to production and some to distribution. The socialists are particularly opposed to "wage slavery," to which they lay all the evils of society. But in fact the wage system has never been given a fair chance. There is nothing wrong in it, either economically or morally. When a producer of wealth chooses to have his share of the joint product of his and his employer's energy and industry given

him at stated periods, it is called wages. Where the difficulty lies is the fact that he is prevented making a perfectly fair bargain. He is compelled by his necessities to consent to work for less than the total value of his labor. The contract is one-sided and the under dog suffers. The trouble is not because of the "soulless employer," but with ungodly conditions back of it all.

As to arousing the masses to "class consciousness," the socialistic attempt to keep conditions hard for the wage-receiving class is just the opposite of the right way to go about the task in hand. The ignorant and down-trodden are far less liable to demand their rights than the intelligent and more prosperous. Every law and custom that will tend to a more equitable division of the joint products of labor and capital will help to create a desire for still greater justice, until finally even under the wages system profits can be entirely eliminated and interest reduced to what the capitalist could make out of it were he using it himself. That will be no burden to labor, but an incentive to the creation of wealth that can be turned into capital.

There are great industrial evils at the present day that need to be remedied. There are class lines and class conditions that should be abolished. There are to be found millionaires rolling in unearned wealth, and poverty-stricken people who should be in affluence. But the Meiko Meyer socialistic methods of righting these wrongs will prove about as effective as the efforts of the Chinese, by beating tom-toms and making other hideous noises, to prevent the blood-stained march of "Christian" armies drunk with power and engaged in the spoliation of their victims.

To attempt to follow all the idiosyncrasies of the socialistic propaganda in the United States is an impossibility. The fact remains, however, that they have a firm hold of many economic truths, and that as class distinctions become more marked here, as with the continued concentration of wealth is inevitable, these truths will more and more appeal to the class

consciousness of the wage-receiving class, until attempts to organize a formidable political party will be crowned with success. When once in possession of the government, it will be as easy for the socialists to appoint judges to decide things their way, as it was for the opponents of the income tax to in a single night induce a majority of the supreme court to overthrow and reverse their own numerous expressed opinions that such a tax was perfectly constitutional. And down in South Carolina, not long ago, a judge of the supreme court of that state was elected on the positive assurance that he would decide as constitutional what another judge had held was contrary to the fundamental law of the commonwealth. Socialism is marching to victory.

---

#### ANARCHY vs. SOCIALISM.

Socialism, which is curiously confounded by the indiscriminating with anarchism, is its exact opposite. Anarchy is the doctrine that there should be no government control; socialism—that is, state socialism—is the doctrine that government should control everything. State socialism affirms that the state—that is, the government—should own all the tools and implements of industry, should direct all occupations, and should give to every man according to his need and require from every man according to his ability. State socialism points to the evils of overproduction in some fields and insufficient production in others, under our competitive system, and proposes to remedy these evils by assigning to government the duty of determining what shall be produced and what each worker shall produce. If there are too many preachers and too few shoemakers, the preacher will be taken from the pulpit and assigned to the bench; if there are too many shoemakers and too few preachers, the shoemaker will be taken from the bench and assigned to the pulpit. Anarchy says, no government; socialism says, all government.—*Lyman Abbott.*