

The socialist and trade unionism. The situation reviewed

I

What is the Socialist attitude toward trade unions and trade unionists?

This is a question which has been agitating certain minds of late—minds which are so overwhelmed with the Socialist theories of political economy that they have lost the power (if they ever had it) of analysing the conditions prevailing, and of judging how far and how completely those conditions warrant the application of the theories.

Starting from the theory that it is inevitable that the condition of the workers will get worse while capitalism lasts—a pronouncement which, under proper and careful definition is perfectly correct—they arrive at the conclusion that trade unions are not, never have been, and never can be, of use to the working class.

These gentlemen are usually men who have given some attention to economic science, who have assimilated a multitude of worthy and irreproachable theories regarding the laws of capitalist society; but, from absence of the judicial mind, they accept these theories without sufficient thought as to their limitations, and as to the conditions which qualify them, and without which they cannot be true. Hence these right and proper theories become mere shibboleths, hobble-skirts about the ankles of those submerged and lost in verbal fashion. It is inevitable that such people will argue (I had almost said think) “in terms of contradiction”.

For instance, they will accept the theory that capitalism presupposes competition, and also the theory that competition tends to monopoly, yet they expect the laws of competition to operate in cases where the conditions of competition have given place to those of monopoly.

These critics and opponents of ours admit—nay, more than that, they are too blatant to be confined within the limits of a mere admission, they assert—the commodity nature of labour-power. They recognise that the owners of the commodity labour-power, like the owners of all other commodities, must always struggle for the best price in order that their commodity may, in the long run, realise its value. Yet, strange confusion of ideas, while admitting the necessity of this continual fight, they would deny the workers the weapons of the struggle—trade union combination and the strike. In this they are so far anti-Socialist to be in perfect accord with the capitalists themselves.

Of course, what blinds them to the true state of affairs is another half-digested theory—that the return to labour is determined by the cost of subsistence. They argue that therefore the resistance of the workers is also determined by the cost of his subsistence, and that he has no need to fashion any other forces than that of his bare, naked will not to give way before he has to; that combination, that organisation, which is so potent and vital a factor on the political field, on the economic field is utterly worthless—a snare, a delusion, a pitfall, a gin, a chimera, a mirage, an obfuscation. The workers are to have none of it. The laws which arise from free competition are quite sufficient, under all capitalist conditions, to give the workers all

they can get under all the circumstances of capitalism.

Forgotten—that the cost of subsistence is not a fixed point; forgotten—that the standard of subsistence is not entirely independent of the workers' power of resistance; forgotten—that the statement that the wage (in the long run) is the reflection of the value of the labour-power is a statement of the effect of a law which implies the highest resistance on both sides; forgotten—that competition leads to monopoly.

With the development of capitalism the conditions of the labour market undergo change. Wage-slavery remains, it is true—no changes reach down to that fundamental condition. But on the side of the purchasers of labour-power there is a tendency to restrict competition. As the smaller employers are crushed out the men find themselves haggling with fewer but more powerful antagonists; as rings and trusts and combines and masters' associations spring up free competition conditions are upset, and the laws which arise from such, and operate only while such conditions obtain, are more or less modified, or displaced by laws which arise out of monopoly conditions.

Let us take any gigantic exploiting concern—the combined railway systems of this country, for instance. No intelligent person will claim that there is the same play of free competition among them as purchasers of labour-power that there is among the employers in many industries. True, the railways as a whole have to compete with other industries for the raw, untrained labour-power in the first place, but after that competition practically ceases. Time was when the companies did “poach” one another's signalmen, drivers, and guards, but now, to all intents and purposes, the “skilled” railway worker has but one possible employer.

To talk of the laws of free competition in this case is a bit wide of the mark. The worker is no longer free to sell himself to the highest bidder, for there is only one bidder. Competition on one side is dead, and the laws of competition hobble along with one foot in a muddy furrow. It would be folly to expect anything else.

Now as there is but one employer that these men can sell their labour-power to, they have not the opportunity of putting themselves up to auction. The only thing they can do is to refuse or threaten to refuse to sell their labour-power upon the offered terms. This, of course, is the strike or the threat to strike.

It is perfectly clear that such a proceeding as this must be collectively engaged in. It is perfectly obvious also that this means combination, organisation. So some form of union becomes the necessary instrument to correct or counterpoise the monopoly conditions set up by the development of combination among the masters.

Combination on the workers' part has the effect, undoubtedly, in such circumstances of considerably increasing their power of resistance, for now the very extent of the employers' needs becomes a source of embarrassment to them. It was no difficult matter to replace a few “malcontents”, but to fill the places of a large and well-organised section is a very different matter.

With the development of capitalism there is necessarily an increased tendency toward

this obliteration of competitive conditions by combination among the masters. The only answer to it at the moment is for the workers to shift their line of resistance from the individual to the collective. Who denies this is an individualist, an anarchist, to the core.

Make no mistake about it, without some form of organisation the men are helpless in face of the present combination and growing tendency to combination on the part of the masters. Yet the very law which our critics adduce against us, the law that labour-power will, like all other commodities, realise its value in the long run, presupposes that they shall continually struggle for better terms. It is only out of this contention of opposing forces that the law operates.

Now our opponents tell us that trade unions and strikes are no good because when a victory is obtained the law of wages “. . . sharp ricks to pinch and peel” and so reduce things to the old level.

This deduction can only be drawn from half-understood theories. While it is true that all their struggle in the labour-market cannot raise the workers’ remuneration above the line fluctuating about the subsistence level, while it is true that any alteration of that subsistence level must, if maintained, result in a corresponding and nullifying intensification of the exploiting system, it is true also that the struggle must be made.

With all the workers’ struggles, say our critics, the economic laws decide that their enjoyment of the wealth produced shall be determined by the necessary cost of subsistence. But they forget to say what would happen *without* the struggle.

If higher wages are answered by speeding-up and improved methods of production, the tendency toward this is always present. Machinery and methods develop with stationary or even falling wages. If every vestige of the workers’ power of resistance was blotted out, so that the only limit to plunder was the physical law that a given amount of food can only produce a given amount of energy, still the means of production would tend to develop, because though that given amount of food could never be made to produce more than a given amount of energy, that energy may be made, by improved methods, to create a greater amount of wealth.

To cease to struggle, therefore, is no means of escaping from the tyrant competition of machinery. On the other hand, to cease the struggle is to reduce human labour-power even below the commodity status. The labour-power of the wage-slave is no more than a commodity because of the wage-slave’s propertyless condition; it is no less than a commodity because he has a power of resistance. Why is the labour-power of a horse not a commodity? Simply because the horse has no power of resistance. The wage-slave owns his labour-power. He is free to take it into the market and fight for the best price for it. The horse does not own his labour-power, hence it is he and not his labour-power who is the commodity. In this respect the chattel slave and the horse are alike, and the fact is reflected in the remarkably similar treatment accorded to both.

These things show, then, the folly of the argument that the struggle of the workers in the economic field *for better conditions under capitalism* is futile and superfluous because the economic laws determine what those conditions shall be. The laws of the

exchange of the commodity labour-power are the laws of free competition. To formulate them is simply to indicate what will happen under given conditions, which in this case include a continual struggle on both the buyer's part and the seller's part.

The struggle, then, is presupposed. Therefore every means that strengthen the workers in that struggle are good in so far as they do so. Organisation, then, becomes necessary to the workers as a foil to that organisation among the capitalists which tends to disturb free competition and set up new conditions. What form shall the organisation take?

The critics who stand so much upon their theories without troubling to make sure that all the conditions necessary to their veracity are present when they apply them, says that organisation must be founded upon a revolutionary and class-conscious basis. Good.

But the same critic will inform us, out of the plenitude of his theories, that all institutions are based on economic conditions. At any rate, the need for combinations among the workers arose long before the knowledge of the working-class position so essential to class-consciousness became general. Indeed, the basis of the trade unions to-day is evidence amounting to almost proof that such knowledge is not wide-spread even now. The material, then, for a class-conscious trade union movement did not exist when the first unions were formed—it does not exist even to-day. In face of these facts how could it be expected that the trade unions could, or can at present, be based upon class-conscious principles?

There is this essential difference between the Socialist movement and the trade union movement: the former was called into being by the need for revolution—the latter was not. It must be recognised that the need for the workers to struggle for the best conditions under capitalism is as real as the need for revolution. In this struggle for the highest price for labour-power the trade unions did and do represent the highest form of weapon which it was or is possible to fashion with the material to hand. So far, then, they are good.

The strike, of course, is the force behind all trade union organisation. A trade union is a combination for the purpose of making it possible to collectively withhold labour-power. All the union's operations are conditioned by the progress made in that direction. Therefore if trade unions are good the strike is good also—though least good, it is possible, when it passes from a standing menace to an active hostility.

Now our critic, who is fond of throwing words into high-sounding phrases and then risking his life for them, tells us that strikes are guerrilla warfare, and therefore are useless. But strikes and the menace of strikes are not guerrilla warfare. On the contrary, in certain circumstances and for the purpose they aim at—the resistance of capitalist encroachment—they are the last resort, the only form of warfare left open.

It is true the opponent of the Socialist attitude tries to play tricks with himself, tries to detach himself from all his human qualities and make himself the mere embodiment of an idea. He claims to view the struggle in the labour-market from "the Socialist standpoint". The view from this elevation is, according to him, that anything which does not directly forward the emancipation of the working class does not concern him.

The possessor of this strange attitude of mind prides himself ostentatiously on having reached that high scientific pinnacle where he is quite beyond the reach of every activity, mental or otherwise, but the abstract idea—Socialism. “Scientifically and logically”, he argues, “to the Socialist, as a Socialist, nothing matters but Socialism”. If a man could stand as the mere receptacle of the one idea, Socialism, the logic of this position might (or might not) be conceded—but scientifically the position is unsound. For the scientist may not stop where the logician does: he has to ask what are the essentials of Socialism. The first essential he discovers is—a human race. Without humanity there can be no Socialism. Directly he admits this he discovers that, even as the frigidly pure, passionless, scientific exponent and advocate of Socialism the every day affairs of men *do* matter, for assuredly if any calamity threatened to blot Man out of the scheme of things, to obliterate one of the essentials of his scientific obsession, it would concern him.

Such an admission, of course, is fatal to the position that the Socialist, as such, is concerned with Socialism alone. For if he is under the necessity of being concerned, in the last analysis, with the existence of the material for his Socialist society, then he has to find reasons for drawing a line anywhere, in matters that affect the condition of that material.

Such reasons do not exist—he is on an inclined plane.

II

We have seen that, in order that the ordinary laws of the competitive market shall find those presupposed conditions in the labour market without which they do not operate, in order, that is to say, that labour-power shall exchange for the cost of its production instead of the cost of its production shaping itself according to the rate of its exchange, combination becomes necessary on the part of the sellers of labour-power.

But the object of this combination, not being revolutionary, does not essentially demand that the combination shall be on a revolutionary basis.

To struggle for higher wages and better conditions is not revolutionary in any sense of the word; and the essential weapons in this struggle are not revolutionary either.

True, the real interest of the working class demands that the basis of every working-class organisation shall be revolutionary—but that is because it demands the revolutionisation of the whole system.

But first of all it demands, not the revolutionising of the basis of working-class organisations, but the revolutionising of the workers themselves.

For how can it be supposed that any mere paper-based revolutionary basis is going to help in the attainment of a revolutionary end if the only force behind it—the members constituting the organisation—have not the revolutionary consciousness?

When the Socialist Party was formed it was formed for a revolutionary purpose. The first thing to be done, therefore, was to put it on a revolutionary basis. This was

defined in a declaration of principles. Only those who can accept these principles are admitted to membership, for only such are fit material for the prosecution of the revolutionary purpose.

On the other hand, trade unions are necessary, not to overthrow the present system, but to resist capitalist encroachment *under* the system. In this case the essential basis is that which will serve for the organisation of the fit material for the purpose in view.

To fix upon a revolutionary basis in this case and under present circumstances must be one of these two things: If it is made a condition of membership it must, because of the smallness of the number of those who have reached the revolutionary stage, render the organisation futile for the purpose which calls it into existence; on the other hand, if the revolutionary basis, having been laid down, is ignored—is not insisted upon as the indispensable condition of admittance to membership, then the organisation is not a revolutionary foundation in the first place, and the revolutionary idea is degraded, and the workers are deluded and confused in the second place.

For the principles of an organisation can only have two virtues. First, as a basis of organisation—a test of membership; secondly as a guide to action. Apart from these, principles are not worth the breath that avows them.

And if the principles are not first made the basis of organisation, if they are not accepted by the membership as pointing the way to their object, they cannot become the guide to action.

Clearly, then, the attitude of the Socialist toward trade unions is well defined. When he says that labour-power has the commodity nature he says that it must express its value *through a struggle* in the labour market. Both these statements force him to the conclusion that the non-revolutionary phase of the struggle between the classes is as inevitable as the revolutionary. Therefore he would not either reduce the trade unions to impotence by closing them to non-Socialists, or spread confusion by getting them to avow principles which are not necessary to their object, and which the members do not hold.

He must, therefore, accept trade unions as they are, and, realising that all their grave and undeniable faults are but the reflection of the mental shortcomings of their members, realise that it is in the latter that the revolutionary foundation is necessary, and act accordingly.

It is hardly necessary to say that those so-called Socialists who would close the economic organisation to the non-Socialist would do two other things besides. They would bar the Socialist from the non-Socialist trade union, and they would shut the doors of the Socialist political organisation to all members of such unions.

The logic of this is, first, that the non-revolutionary struggle in the economic field is not necessary, or

That the struggle against capitalist encroachments *is* revolutionary.

If the struggle is not necessary it is, of course, quite logical for a Socialist party to

demand that its members shall have none of it. On the other hand, if the struggle is revolutionary it is perfectly logical for the Socialist to demand that the economic organisations formed to prosecute that struggle be revolutionary also.

The present scribe has never met with one of these gentlemen whose faith he is attacking, who, being asked the plain question: "Is it necessary for the workers to struggle for better wages and conditions for better wages and conditions of labour", would dare answer no; or who, being asked if such struggle is revolutionary, dare answer yes.

So our non trade-unionist critic, in his mad endeavour to restrict the actions of the class-conscious worker to the purely revolutionary object, gets himself into a most illogical position. He starts by declaring that nothing but Socialism concerns the Socialist. He perceives that this implies that the Socialist must be able to detach himself from the world that is, since it is not a Socialist world. Well, everything must be distorted to fit his pet theories. He professes himself able to so detach himself. He declares that he can view all things "as a Socialist", which with him means from the standpoint that nothing matters but Socialism. When he is put to the question of his attitude toward trade unions he shuts his eyes and jumps.

Of course, it is a rather awkward situation. To say that the Socialist can view all things from the standpoint that nothing matters but Socialism is an easy matter, but it wants a deal of upholding when the worker has got to view the labour market from the standpoint of the seller of labour-power. Is he, if he understands Socialist economics, and therefore all the better understands the necessity of the struggle against capitalist encroachment, to give up personal participation in the struggle? Is he, directly he becomes armed and equipped for the battle of the future, to be rendered powerless and paralytic in the equally necessary struggle of the present?

If, when a worker attains to class-consciousness, he ceases to require food, clothing and shelter, ceases to be a vendor of labour-power, ceases to be under the necessity which all commodity owners are under—of fighting for the realisation of the value of his commodity, in this case labour-power; if, in short, he ceases to be anything but a pure abstraction in whom even the charitable raven could find no want to minister to, no lodgement for a beakful of material sustenance, then it might be logical to say that no Socialist can belong to a trade union.

But if the class-conscious worker still must live by the sweat of his brow, or rather by the sale of his potential energy, then he must resort to the instrument which make the conditions of a sale, as distinct from the conditions which environ the chattel slave's dole.

Among these instruments, for a certain number, are, under present conditions, trade unions *on a non-revolutionary base*. And as far as the Socialist thinks them necessary to his personal economic welfare, as far, that is, as economic pressure forces him to, he is right and justified in using them.

And when I speak of economic pressure I do not mean merely the degree of it which marks the border-line of semi-starvation. Economic pressure, it is too often forgotten, commences with the first atomic offering of economic advantage, and the degree

where the individual is sensible of it and consciously influenced by it, is here or there as circumstances decide.

The critic who would “determinedly and consciously” fight the trade unions “out of existence” provides no alternative instrument for carrying on the struggle against capitalist encroachment *now*. When he offers us economic organisation upon a revolutionary base he tells us that the resistance on the economic field has to cease until he has made his revolutionaries! Even the advocates of “Industrial Unionism” were not so blind as this, for they, recognising that not only the revolutionaries were necessary to the present “bargaining or higgling for better conditions”, belied the “revolutionary” foundation of their organisation by leaving it open for non-revolutionaries.

The only shred of argument the anti-trade-unionist can find in support of his attitude is the plea that the trade unions are political organisations. But here again he is bereft of reason. A political organisation is an organisation composed of those who organise for the political purpose. There is no such trade union in the whole wide country. Trade unionists organise for economic reasons, not political—not even to attain economic ends by political means. If the wirepullers lead them into taking political action they do not make them political organisations, but, in the storm of dissension and disruption they arouse, prove their essentially non-political character. It takes more than a few political tricksters, battenning upon the ignorance and apathy of the membership, to constitute a trade union a political organisation, just as it required more than a few reactionaries in the Socialist Party to constitute that organisation a reactionary body.

But the whole purpose of economic organisation is a mystery to the particular type of opponent whom the present writer is combating. They say that it is impossible “at the present stage of capitalist development, for trade unions to take only economic action”. How they arrive at this conclusion appears when they declare that the Socialist position “insists upon the political and *economic* organisation of the working class for the capture of *political* power”.

If economic organisation is a means to the capture of political power, then it may be argued, with some show of reason, that trade unions are political organisations and therefore can take only political action.

But it is ridiculous to talk of economic organisation for the capture of political power. Such an object at once makes the organisation political, not economic. If men organise for the purpose of “bargaining and higgling for better conditions” by combined action on the industrial field, then their organisation is an economic one. If they organise to attain the same end by political means, then it is a political organisation as well as an economic one.

But the case of our anti-trade-unionist opponent does not come within the limits of either of these descriptions. He tells us that the “bargaining or higgling for better conditions in itself is no concern of Socialism”,—though he puts it that way to obscure the fact that he means that they are no concern of Socialists.

If he does not mean this there is no sense in his remark, for Socialism has no senses,

and so can have no concerns.

As the economic struggle is no concern of the Socialist, and all the members of the economic organisation are to be Socialists, the economic organisation cannot be concerned with the economic struggle, it cannot be an economic organisation.

As the economic organisation that isn't economic has for its purpose the capture of political power, it is a political organisation. A pretty picture our opponent's tangle makes when it is straightened out.

But stay, there is one frail thread's end not yet taken up. It will be claimed, perhaps, that the organisation exists to use economic means to capture political power, and *is* economic. This is the only argument left.

But then what are these means? There are but two possible replies. One is the reply of the Anarchist—the General Strike. The other is the reply of the Industrial Unionist; it is that they must “SEIZE AND HOLD THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION, *in defiance of the armed forces*”, in defiance, necessarily, of the political power they desire to capture.

The Socialist position does not “insist upon the political and *economic* organisation of the working class for the capture of political power”. The Socialist position is that the capture of political power must be the work of a political party, the fruit of political action. The capture of political power is necessary to enable the economic action of taking over the means of production to be proceeded with. Therefore it is madness to say the Socialist position “insists upon the . . . economic organisation of the working class for the capture of political power”.

The Socialist position is adequately laid down in the Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party thus: “The working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government”. That was true when it was adopted. Let all beware of adding or taking away a word.

III

The anti-trade-union “Socialist” even goes so far as to declare that a Socialist organisation or journal cannot legitimately criticise trade union action—cannot offer comment upon a strike that has failed, and point out mistakes that have been made, and courses it would have been wiser to follow.

The argument used to support this contention is that a strike, and also the object of it, is a sectional concern, and that therefore the Socialist organ that enters upon the subject is guilty of sectional action contrary to the class basis of its principles.

Here again we have the old trouble—the shibboleth; the tyranny of terms and theories. The class idea is only partly understood.

When we speak of the class basis of Socialism we imply its direct and irreconcilable antagonism to capitalism and the capitalist class. Our organisation, our politics, our activities, are based upon the recognition of the class struggle. That is all.

Now the first phase of the class struggle which the workers are up against is the struggle to live in the present. This is quite as real a part of the class struggle as the endeavour for emancipation itself—though some otherwise enlightened wage-slaves whose lot is a comparatively easy one, seem unable to realise this.

The very elements of this struggle to live are “class”. True, a strike is sectional in a certain narrow sense; but it is only a sectional phase of a class effort; it is a part of the struggle of the working class against capitalist aggression.

As a matter of fact, this phase of the class struggle—the fight for wages and conditions—can only assume this sectional aspect. To assume an entirely “class” aspect involves the General Strike in its complete form. That, of course, can never come, because it presupposes organisation so far in advance of itself as to make it reactionary—organisation calling for Socialism, not for improved wages and conditions.

It is not, then, inconsistent with the revolutionary position to render support to trade unions in any action they may take upon sound lines, or to criticise their actions when they are unsound.

From what has been said it is clear that the Socialist Party cannot be antagonistic to the trade unions under present conditions, even though they have not a revolutionary basis. On the contrary, it cannot even wish this base to be changed for the revolutionary one, since the revolutionary material does not exist in sufficient quantity to enable unions restricted to such to perform their necessary functions.

What the Socialist Party must, however, be hostile to, is the misleading by the trade union leaders and the ignorance of the rank and file which make such misleading possible. But we call the manifestation of this hostility by a very good name—propaganda.

As to the future attitude of the Socialist Party toward trade unions, of course, the present penman has no warrant to speak. But to give a strictly personal view, it seems hardly conceivable that the trade unions will fail to adapt themselves to the growth of revolutionary knowledge amongst their memberships. There at present appears to be no reason why they should not. There is nothing fixed about their bases which would preclude the change without the whole structures toppling to the ground—always provided, of course, the one essential condition for their maintenance—a revolutionary rank and file—is at hand.

And even when the time comes when the revolutionary element among the membership could secure a narrow majority in a vote there seems to be no obvious reason for purging the organisations of those who do not hold the revolutionary opinion. Such a course could hardly avoid weakening the unions in their proper sphere of action under capitalist conditions, and would not strengthen them for the revolutionary purpose of the future. In addition, to do so must inevitably be to set up rival trade unions on a reactionary basis, and this would defeat the object of the revolutionaries in taking the step of revolutionising the unions.

For when it becomes a question of the respective strength of revolutionary and non-revolutionary unions, and more particularly as the first increased in strength, economic necessity would force men to hide their political convictions and creep into the organisation which offered them the best prospects immediately—just as it forces revolutionary workers to-day to join economic organisations on a non-revolutionary basis, and dominated by reactionaries and traitors.

To make political convictions the test of membership of organisations which men are forced to join on pain of economic penalty, therefore, is pre-ordained to defeat its own object.

And what good could be expected? The two functions of economic organisation are—immediate, and ultimate. The first is non-revolutionary, the second revolutionary. But though the two are so different they are not antagonistic. The non-revolutionary is not anti-revolutionary. To fight for present life does not delay the overthrow of the present social system. When the worker acquires revolutionary consciousness he is still compelled to make the non-revolutionary struggle.

Moreover, after his conversion his methods on the economic field differ little from those he previously was compelled to follow. His greater knowledge will save him from many blunders in the field, will show him how little he has to hope for from the struggle he is compelled to make. But substantially the efforts of the revolutionary and the non-revolutionary unionist on the economic field are reduced to the same plane—that is, they must endeavour to restrict competition amongst themselves; to organise for collectively withholding their special quality of labour-power.

It is on the political field that the two part company and become antagonistic.

It is not difficult to understand this. The immediate object of economic organisation—the only one which present trade unions have—is non-political. It cannot be fought out on the political field. The arena is the labour market.

On the contrary, that other and future function of economic organisation, which is to take over and administer things when the workers have obtained political supremacy and destroyed the power of the State—that function cannot begin to be active until the workers have fought out the struggle upon the political field.

All fit material, revolutionary or non-revolutionary, for the struggle on the economic field—the resistance to capitalist encroachment—can and *must* prosecute the fight together. But directly the political is entered upon, one is necessarily working for or against the revolution, and the non-revolutionary worker of the economic field becomes an anti-revolutionist in the arena of politics.

It is just because this is so that it became necessary to organise a separate political party of the workers. It was necessary to leave the workers the instrument of their resistance to capitalist encroachment while the weapon for capitalism's overthrow was being forged. Had the requirements of the two objects been the same—had the non-revolutionary worker been unnecessary in the present struggle upon the economic

field, or had he been of any use in the revolutionary struggle, then the political and the economic organisations might have been one.

This seems to indicate that, as the revolutionary element in trade unions grows stronger, the same difficulty that at present makes it impossible to impose any political restriction upon their membership—that is, that disruption would result—will compel the unions to relegate all political action to political organisations.

Thus with the gradual spread of Socialist views and the consequent change of men's minds, the unions may gradually become the fit instrument of what final purpose of economic organisation may have, without the purging process.

For it is difficult to see, at the present time, what is to be gained by the expulsion of such members as have not then embraced the revolutionary idea. The strength of the Socialist movement can never be judged by the strength of the economic organisation, whatever the supposed basis, but by the power of the working class political party, hence the presence of un-class-conscious workers in economic organisations avowedly open to such cannot well mislead. And at all events they will be present in such economic organisations as are ostensibly closed to them when those organisations are strong enough to influence their chances of obtaining work.

Of course, if the economic organisation was formed to “take and hold” in the face of the political supremacy of the master class, things would be different—a different material would be required. But economic organisation is not demanded for that purpose, but for carrying on production and distribution when the political party has achieved its purpose. It seems logical to suppose that, since production and distribution will not then be carried on by the revolutionaries alone, even the reactionary labour power may be better organised inside the economic organisations than outside.

However, interesting as these speculations are, they are rather outside the province of the present articles, which concern the attitude *to-day* of Socialists toward trade unions. This attitude cannot be one of hostility, though it devolves upon Socialists to combat the unsound action of trade unions and trade unionists, as also the ignorance from which these unsound actions spring. But when trade unions take action on sound lines it becomes Socialists to remember their class allegiance and give them support.

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