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Charles Seymour

LEAFLETS FOR THE PEOPLE.

No. I.

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

Capital, says the *Quarterly Review*, avoids tumult and disputes, and is of a timid disposition. That is very true, but not the whole truth. Capital abhors the absence of profit, or a very small profit, as Nature abhors a vacuum. With sufficient profit, Capital becomes daring. Ten per cent. certain, and it can be had everywhere; twenty per cent. and it becomes lively; fifty per cent., positively rash; for 100 per cent., it tramples all human laws under foot; 300 per cent., and there is no crime which it will not venture to commit, even at the risk of the gallows. If tumult and disputes are profitable, it will encourage them both.—KARL MARX.

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Queensland Social-Democratic Federation.

OBJECTS.

1. To publish and disseminate literature on social-economic subjects with a view to educate the people upon the true principles that should govern society.
2. To do such other work as may appear necessary for the advancement of Socialism.

Literary contributions on social-economic subjects will be received and published if approved of by the Committee, Q.S.D.F.

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LEAFLETS FOR THE PEOPLE.—No. 1.

SOCIALISM.

IN a speech delivered by Lord Salisbury, in the House of Lords, on May 19th, 1890, he made use of the following words: "Those Socialistic proposals are connected with great evils, and no one who is not absolutely blind will deny the existence of those evils. . . . It is our duty to do all we can to find remedies for those evils, even if we are called Socialists for doing so, we shall be reconciled to it." That there are evils in society as at present constituted, the Tory Prime Minister of England thus admits. The people who show that the causes of these evils result from our present industrial system are called Socialists, Communists, and Anarchists, the world over. To this we have to make up our minds to become reconciled. Through unconscious ignorance in some cases, but oftener through deliberate misrepresentations, the press, with few exceptions, confounds the aims and objects advocated by the various progressive schools—Socialism, Communism, Anarchism. Upon the two latter theories this leaflet does not attempt to touch, but will, in as short a space as possible, deal with the more practical question of Socialism.

State Socialism means a legitimate and constitutional action, whereby the whole of the natural resources, as well as the means of production and exchange of any country, shall belong to the people of that country, and that industry should be regulated by duly appointed representatives for the good of the people generally, with the object of giving to every one the opportunity as well as the right of exercising their labour. Like all other progressive ideas Socialism has and is meeting with fierce opposition from the same class of people that has persecuted and abused a Bruno, a Galileo, and a Darwin; but in spite of all their opposition it moves by appealing to intelligence, as is proved by the rapidly swelling number of its converts.

That the definition of Socialism above given—which is a fair one—cannot be considered "revolutionary," the most rabid Patriotic Leaguer would agree, but the speed at which we are driven under our present industrial system oftentimes prevents sincere and well-meaning men from investigating the subject, and consequently they take for granted as truth the statements of those who think the present the best of all worlds, because they are raised a step on the ladder of life, and forget the struggling woes of the people as a whole. That these old, stand-still objectors to progress can never find sympathy or

support in the young and rising school of politicians is evidenced by the ridiculous arguments they offer against the rising tide of Socialism. The pioneers of the movement are generally charged by these objectors to it with having personal interested motives, or else, should a man who advocates it happen to be wealthy, he is charged with insincerity for not giving away what he possesses himself.

Other objections are, that under a Socialistic system individuality and incentive to put forward best efforts would be destroyed; that such a system would be controlled by jobbery and corruption; and that Socialists want to make all men equal in all things. Such shallow objections as these, which are the principal ones offered, can be easily refuted. To charge the man who has nothing with being a schemer and talker for personal motives does not disprove what he says; and on the other hand, to ask the wealthy Socialist to practice what he preaches by giving up that which he possesses, is absurd on the face of it, for it would be only transferring the cause of the evils to other individuals, and it is not individuals but rather the system of wealth production that the fight is against. Instead of jobbery and corruption in the regulating of industry by the State, we would have more honesty than individual employers can find in the present system, for who would care to steal or be corrupt under a system in which there would be enough for all? And in proof that such would be the case, we may look at the amount of land not in use and the numbers of unemployed, and consider the effect of so regulating both these factors that one could be applied to the other in the most economic manner for producing real wealth. What premium then would there be for dishonesty, as we know it, where all men lived by labour? As for making men equal, such thoughts never enter the Socialist's mind, for he will distinctly tell you that it is impossible to make Nature distribute intellectual power equally among mankind, but that it is POSSIBLE TO GIVE MANKIND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, so that each individual may be developed to the greatest extent. Under a Socialistic state all would have to work either by brain or hand, and the reward for exertion such as we now see put out by inventors, scientists, artists, and writers, would be the pleasing recompense of being recognised as the benefactor of your fellows, and of having done work of which the mere doing even now satisfies the true artist. It is by work alone, whether of brain or hand, that the best specimens of humanity can be brought to the front; and yet now we may see large numbers that are born to wealth and by the accident of their birth exempted from ever working at all. What may not the world lose in their cases? one might jocularly ask.

What, then, are the evils of the present industrial system? The answer to this question can be simply and sadly told. Under its cruel competitiveness the strong, the true, the morally honest, and the most of those who are good and noble go under, and in which the cunning alone survive. Not only does the daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly wage-earner hate it, but so also does the capitalist, from the lordly millionaire to the petty shopkeeper. Unexpressed though the hate and fear may be, it is there nevertheless. The workman fears the day

when he may be unemployed and his little ones be hungering. The capitalist, whether he be the millionaire speculator, or the smallest trader, cannot tell the day or the hour when the accumulations of a lifetime may not be all swept away and lost, by the out-generalling of a smarter competitor in the race for riches, leaving him in old age a beggared, broken-down man, craving the charity of his more successful rival, who may very often be a less scrupulous and honourable man than himself. The true Socialist recognises these struggles, and sympathises with all alike, whether tillers of the soil, town manufacturers, or those engaged in commerce, employers or employed. All, all are alike under the whip of competition, which more than anything else defeats the morality given forth in Palestine nineteen centuries ago.

Look at this picture! That we have our periods of depression and briskness in trade repeatedly occurring is patent to anyone. Take a new country for example. In the beginning we do not see the extremes of wealth and want. Everything and everyone are prosperous and active. All are in haste to become rich. Some engage in farming, others in manufacture and commerce, in anticipation of increased demand for their commodities. Industry booms. Everyone is employed. Bye and bye it is found out that more is produced than is required for immediate wants. Commodities then become a drug, production eases off, and workmen are discharged. Fiercer competition ensues. By it some are ruined who were once comfortably off. The discharged workman must go on short commons, and will remain so until the amount over produced is consumed. Then times get a little brisker. The workmen have another spell of work. In the beginning probably on short time, or reduced wages, the latter brought about by the competition of the owners of the commodities in the selling market, and over which the workmen have no control, but have, just the same, to bear the brunt of reduced prices. Both employer and employed, generally, suffer; so also does the quality of the goods, for then commences the adulteration of commodities by the cunning, in which adulteration all must participate who wish to hold their head above water.

All this is caused by lack of co-operation, for want of the necessary regulation of industry which would allow production to go steadily on, and in such a manner that all would be employed for use and not for profit. This irregularity of production is one of the most lamentable phases in our present system of industry. The employer does not like it, neither does the workman. The one fears that his neighbour in industry will ruin him. The other the day he will be out of work. The Socialist says it is a wrong system. What do you say?

How strange! Over-production, and yet people wanting! Unlimited raw wealth undeveloped, and plenty of unemployed labour! And yet, your orthodox politician never attempts even to touch on the evils herein pointed out, which refusal on his part is one of the causes of the discontent which finds expression in the Labour Movement. In spite of the neglect shown to this great question by legislators, it has in itself that which will inevitably bring about a most pronounced stage of Socialism. It is an economic fact that those who produce cheapest

now survive. Wondrous inventions are brought in to take the place of the old-fashioned style of producing or manufacturing. Division of labour ensues. Already the largest producers and manufacturers are beginning to see the recklessness of competing one against the other, consequently we see the growth of syndicates, rings, and trusts, which are nothing else but an adaptation for profit-making of the co-operative principle. Who will deny that numbers of struggling employers have been, are being, and will be, ruthlessly crushed out of existence by the growth of those mammoth companies, directed and controlled by the men who have the ability to conduct such organisations? What sympathy is expressed for these struggling employers by our cruel system? What cant it is to say in their instance, "Live, and let live." No, no; in our days, as regards wealth production, it is "Have, or be had."

Is there any way out of this horrible system? The Socialist answers, Yes. And here let the manner be pointed out. First of all, the State should make provision for absorbing the unemployed, and which can be done by establishing a judicious system of State-aided Village Settlement, thus giving the people the opportunity to exercise their labour, which they have not got now unless at the whim of another. This will also develop agriculture, the neglect of which has brought us so many evils that English statesmen now recognise that "back to the land" is no empty cry. By village settlements, conducted under State control, we can solve the unemployed question, and ease our towns of the rapidly-growing surplus labour that concentrates in them, and which, if allowed to increase in numbers, will be the cause of serious trouble. Such village settlements being once established, would place within men's reach the means of an independent and comfortable living—never mind the riches. Secondly, the Government should in every instance employ directly their own labour, thus paving the way for abolishing the sweater, which the contract system is responsible for. That Government institutions will not bear the cleanest investigations at present may be true, but then you never see brought to light the unmoral honesty of private concerns. The man that adulterates goods is oftentimes a highly respectable member of the most fashionable church. Production goes on for profit. The use of an article is never considered in manufacturing it, and in our haste to get rich for fear of a probable day of want all of us are tempted to become rogues, and although public institutions may not be at present as they should be, they are as honestly conducted as private institutions, if you take everything all round into consideration. Thirdly, as the time is rapidly approaching when industry will be so controlled by private syndicates, as before pointed out, owing to smart captains of industry recognising the folly of competition, and soon whole branches of production will be thus monopolised, making it more and more impossible for any individual to live except as an employee. When that stage arrives, as it will inevitably, the owners of such rings and syndicates will have the power of exacting tribute from the community, which must necessarily apply to the monopolists for the article it needs; and when any few men can so exact tribute it is simply a usurpa-

tion of the power which we regard as belonging to Governments alone. Consequently, the people will very quickly see the dangerous position in which they will be placed, and will make arrangements for Governments to take over all such monopolies for their protection. That the evolution of our present industrial system will bring about Socialism of the kind here set forth, any person can easily see for himself if he will only think the matter out. Also that we are continually experimenting that way cannot be denied. But instead of the Socialism we now enact in our laws being for the people as a whole it is, with few exceptions on the contrary, put forth on behalf of a particular class. Take, for example, protection and State-aided immigration! The former is an attempt of Government to regulate industry, but to say that it will of itself benefit the masses is absurd so long as there is unemployed labour eager for work and offering itself for what it can barely exist on. Those who will benefit by protection are those who hold the means of production and are smart enough to crush out their rivals in trade. For what protection is there for the labourer when labour is in excess of demand? Practically none. In proof of this, you can see no difference in the condition of labourers either in protected or freetrade countries. There is poverty both in Freetrade England and in Protective America. So long as there are unemployed it is a proof that protection is not the cure-all some people would make it out to be. But, then, neither is freetrade. Protection is "State interference" exerted on behalf of the few and not of the many. State-aided immigration is of a similar nature, in spite of its being said by the orthodox legislator that immigration is good for the welfare of all. It is nothing else than a taxing of the masses of the wage-earning community to bring more competitors of their own kind into the country so that the price of labour may be kept low. The labourer cannot obtain employment excepting by leave of those who hold the means of production, and the latter will not employ the labourer unless there is a profit to be made out of the transaction. As the capitalist who can obtain the cheapest labour has a big advantage over his fellow capitalists, consequently the policy of State-aided immigration in a new country is intended to provide that plentiful supply of unemployed labour common in all old countries. Like protection, it is solely for the benefit of the employing class, and no "State interference" will ever benefit the people unless its benefits are for the whole community. The State authority, controlled by the employing class, is on the one hand exerted to protect this employing class from outside competition, and on the other exerted to maintain a surplus amount of labour to keep down wages, and is in no way in consonance with true Socialism, but opposed to it. Yet it is "State interference" which the very advocates of these class measures denounce when demanded on behalf of the people generally. When opponents of true Socialism assert that it is impossible to control governmental institutions of industry, they surely reflect in a most pitiful and condemnatory manner on the present industrial system, for they use an argument that is tantamount to saying that there is no such thing as honesty at present. Anyone following closely all their written arguments in opposition will

find, in most cases, that instead of relying on reasonable facts to prove their case they are more apt to use abuse as their weapon wherewith to answer the unalterable facts that every day secure adherents to Socialism. If Socialism is right it will prevail in spite of abuse. If it is wrong it must be combated in an intelligent manner, for as time goes by so does the number of socialists increase. Their numbers are reaching such a magnitude that abuse alone will not change their views. Every other day sees Socialistic publications written and strewn broadcast amongst the people, which must have an effect of making them take a deeper interest in what concerns their welfare than ever they did before. Then we have a continual repetition of periods of revival and depression in trade; gigantic strikes, generally caused through the workman striving to better his condition or to resist a reduction; continual unemployed agitations in every quarter of the civilised globe; men clamouring with want in the midst of plenty. Surely the time has arrived when the wrongs which bring these things about, and are the causes of this general discontent amongst the masses of the people, should be traced to their source by those claiming to be the people's representatives. It is only in this way that the evils which follow dissatisfaction, when it is felt by the larger number, can be avoided. Unless politicians do this, the same conditions of penury and want that exist in older countries will soon be seen here, for everywhere like conditions give like results. Let it be hoped that they will do so in the interests of us all, and that soon. For unrest is already everywhere amongst the working classes. Australia can be the world's brightest jewel if she will lead the van in permanently abolishing the unrest, and in solving the great unemployed difficulty.

To conclude, it is not to be assumed that the whole of the social evils and their remedies can be set forth in one short pamphlet, and it is to be hoped that readers who have never before indulged in this kind of literature will read more. There are many phases of the subject, particularly the land question, which all deserve earnest thought. But this much all should bear in mind: we are all slaves of the same industrial system. The employer is as much under the lash as the employee. Capital is not the enemy of Labour, but its right hand *when properly used*. It is not used properly now, which is what brings about labour troubles and bankruptcies. If the Socialist does at times speak hotly it is the presence of misery that urges him to do so—want and misery which are likely to make us all feel uncomfortable. He does not covet anyone's goods for himself alone, but wants things so regulated that there would be enough and ample for all, which would prevent covetousness and prepare the way for the time when we shall do unto others as we would wish them to do to us. This is utterly impossible under the system of industrial production which we now have.