

Twilight and Dawn (December 7, 1901)

In the United States, as in other countries, international socialism is making tremendous strides and its seven million supporters spread out all over the belts and zones of the globe, and the most active propagandists ever known, will in the next few years be multiplied into controlling majorities in all lands which have modern industry as the basis of their civilization, socialism being wholly a question of economic development. This will mean the end of the present capitalist competitive system and the introduction of its economic successor, the cooperative commonwealth.

The movement is international because it is born of and follows the development of the capitalist system, which in its operation is confined to no country, but by the stimulus of modern agencies of production, exchange, communication, and transportation has overleaped all boundary lines and made the world the theater of its activities. By this process all the sections of the earth must finally be drawn into relations of industrial and commercial cooperation, as the economic basis of modern brotherhood.

This is the goal of modern socialism and it is this that inspires its disciples with the zeal and ardor of crusaders.

So much has been said and written of socialism by persons who have no proper conception of its origin, its philosophy, and its mission, or who, for reasons of their own, have resorted to willful misrepresentation, that it is not strange that a great many people instinctively shrink from the merest mention of it, and look upon those who advocate this perfectly sane and scientific doctrine as the enemies of society, maliciously plotting to overthrow its cherished institutions.

What is socialism? To answer in a single sentence, it means the collective ownership by all the people of all the means of wealth production and distribution. It is purely an economic question; the evolution of industry has developed socialism. Man can only work, produce wealth, with tools. The mere hand tools of former times have become ponderous and very costly machines. These machines, socialists content, represent progressive social conceptions. These and the factories, mills, and shops in which they are housed, as well as the lands and mines from which the raw

materials are drawn, are used in common by the workers, and in their very nature are marked for common ownership and control. Socialism does not propose the collective ownership of property, but of capital; that is to say, the instruments of wealth production, which, in the form of private property, enable a few capitalists to exploit vast numbers of workers, thus creating millionaires and mendicants and inaugurating class rule and all its odious and undemocratic distinctions.

Socialism proposes equal rights and opportunities for all without reference to sex, color, or other conditions. Equality is the vital principle of socialism. Its mission is to abolish class rule by making all equal proprietors of the means upon which all depend for employment, and without which there can be no "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness." This insures economic freedom for every human being. As no one would have private property in that upon which another dependent for employment, industrial mastery and slavery would disappear together and competition for profit would give way to cooperation for use.

The rapidly changing economic conditions are paving the way for the transition from competitive capitalism to cooperative socialism. Socialists are simply indicating the trend of the evolution, and seeking to prepare the way for its orderly reception. The coming of socialism is with them not a debatable question. That is not a matter of doubt or conjecture, but of scientific calculation.

The evolution of the social organization is a fact in nature. In the ceaseless process one state of society follows another in the sequence of succession. Capitalism, the present system, was warmed into life in the womb of feudalism and sprang from that medieval system. Within the span of two centuries this system has practically reached the climax of its development, and the marvelous material progress of that period exceeds the achievements of all the centuries since the slaves of Pharaoh built the pyramids.

The rapid centralization of capital and the extensive cooperation of labor mark the high state of our economic development. Individual initiative and competitive effort are becoming less and less possible. The day of small production has passed, never to return. Notwithstanding the outcry, trusts and department stores, these great modern agencies, increase in number and power. They are the inevitable outgrowth of the competitive system. The efforts of small capitalists to destroy trusts will prove as

fruitless as the efforts of workingmen to destroy labor-saving machines when first introduced in the last century.

Socialists take the ground that the trust in itself is not an evil, that the evil lies wholly in the private ownership, and its operation for private profit. The remedy is collective ownership and they propose to transfer all such agencies from private hands to the collectivity, to be managed and operated for the good of all.

Ignoring all such alleged issues as "expansion," "imperialism," "free silver," "gold standard," "protection," "free trade," etc., the Socialist Party declares that economic freedom is the supreme question that confronts the people. A century and a quarter ago the revolution settled the question of political equality in the United States. But since then an industrial revolution has taken place and political equality exists in name only, while the great mass struggle in economic servitude. The working class are dependent upon the capitalist class, who own machines and other means of production; and the latter class, by virtue of their economic mastery, are the ruling class of the nation, and it is idle under such conditions to claim that men are equal and that all are sovereign citizens. No man is free in any just sense who has to rely upon the arbitrary will of another for the opportunity to work. Such a man works, and therefore lives, by permission, and this is the present economic relation of the working class to the capitalist class.

In the last century millions of workers were exploited of the fruit of their labor under the institution of chattel slavery. Work being done by hand, ownership of the slave was a condition necessary to his exploitation. But chattel slavery disappeared before the march of industrial evolution, and today would be an economic impossibility. It is no longer necessary to own the body of the workingman in order to appropriate the fruit of his labor; it is only necessary to own the tool with which he works, and without which he is helpless. This tool in its modern form is a vast machine which the worker cannot afford to buy, and against which he cannot compete with his bare hands, and in the very nature of the situation he is at the mercy of the owner of the machine, his employment is precarious, and his very life is suspended by a thread.

Then, again, the factory and mine are operated for profit only ad the owner can, and often does, close it down at will, throwing hundreds, perhaps thousands, out of employment who, with their families are as helpless as if in the desert wastes of Sahara.

The few who own the machines do not use them. The many who use them do not own them. The few who own them are enabled to exploit the many who use them; hence a few millionaires and many mendicants, extreme opulence and abject poverty, princely palaces and hideous huts, riotous extravagance and haggard want, constituting social scenes sickening to contemplate, and in the presence of which the master hand of Hugo or Dickens is palsied and has no mission.

The Socialist Party is organizing in every village and hamlet, every town and city of every state and territory of the union. It is appealing to the people. It will neither fuse nor compromise. It proposes to press forward, step by step, until it conquers the political power and secures control of government.

This will mark the end of the capitalist system. The factories and mills and mines, the railroads and telegraph and telephone, and all other means of production and distribution will be transferred to the people in their collective capacity, industry will be operated cooperatively, and every human being will have the "inalienable right" to work and to enjoy the fruit of his labor. The hours of labor will be reduced according to the progress of invention. Rent, interest, and profit will be no more. The sordid spirit of commercial conquest will be dead. War and its ravages will pass into history. Economic equality will have triumphed, labor will stand forth emancipated, and the sons and daughters of men will glorify the triumphs of social democracy.