

LASSALLE'S  
OPEN LETTER

TO THE  
**National Labor Association**  
OF GERMANY.

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TRANSLATED BY  
JOHN EHMANN AND FRED. BADER.

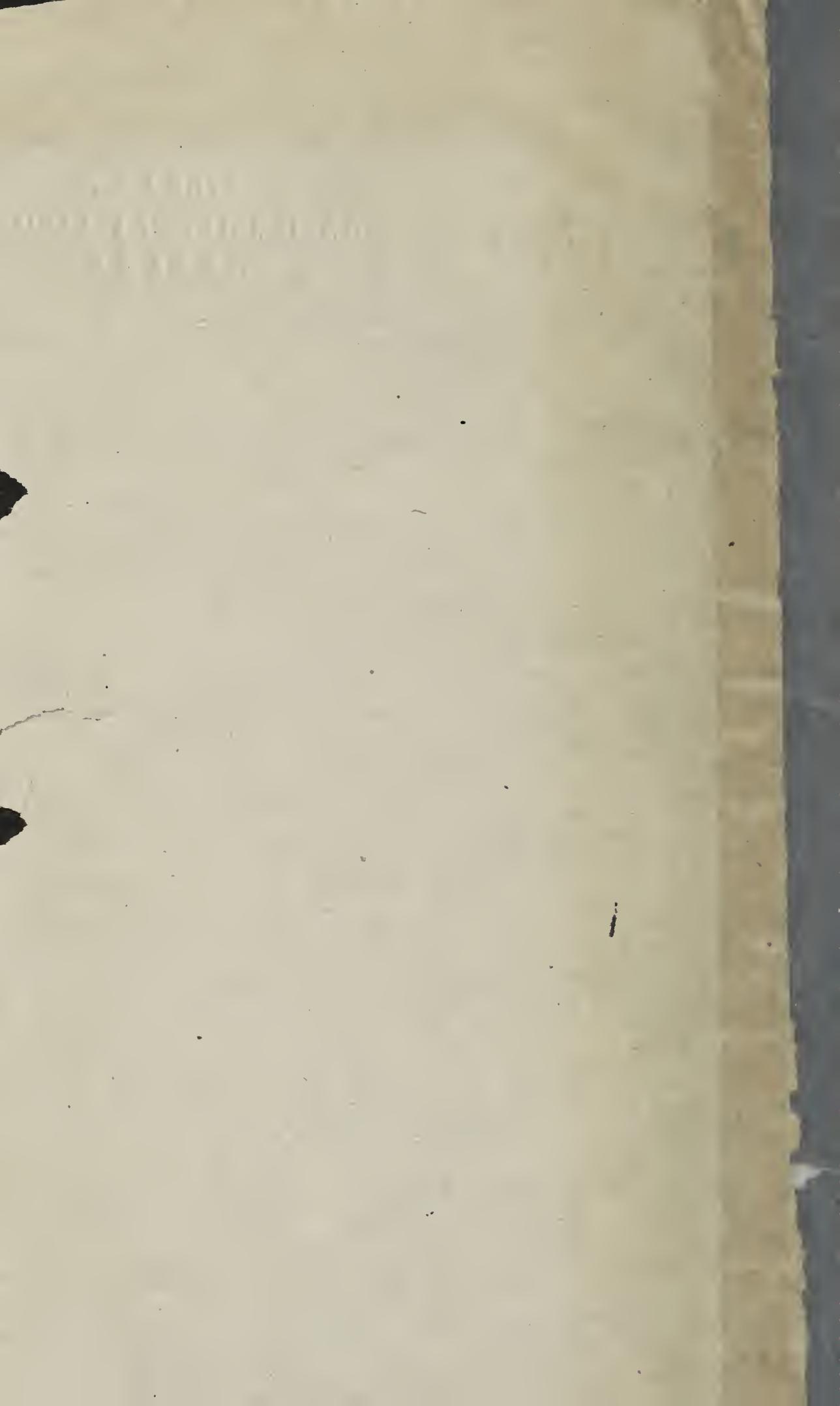
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**PRICE 10 CENTS.**

PUBLISHED AND FOR SALE BY  
**The National Executive Committee**  
OF THE  
**SOCIALISTIC LABOR PARTY**

PHILIP VAN PATTEN, Cor. Sec'y,

CINCINNATI, O.



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### **Explanatory Note.**

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In the month of October, 1862, a Workingmen's Convention was held in the city of Nuremberg, Bavaria, for the purpose of considering means whereby the condition of the working people of Germany might be improved. The Convention adjourned without reaching any conclusion, but it was resolved to meet again in convention at Leipzig in the fall of 1863, and the Central Committee of the Workingmen's Association in Leipzig was instructed to make preparations for the proposed convention.

Accordingly this Committee visited Berlin and called upon prominent members of the Prussian Diet, especially those of the Liberal Party, asking them to frame a platform upon which the working people could unite for the advancement of their interests.

Schultze Delitzsch, the well-known Liberal member, declined to support the demand for Universal Suffrage, as did also all Representatives of the "Progressive" Party. Disgusted with these "statesmen" and convinced that their help was not to be counted on, the Committee met an old philanthropist, Dr. Joerrisen, who told them that he knew of only one man intelligent and courageous enough to draw up a suitable platform, and that man was Ferdinand Lassalle, a private and almost unknown citizen in Berlin. The Committee called at Lassalle's house, but as he was absent, the Committee left a letter stating the object of their visit.

In reply, Lassalle published this open letter.]

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# Offenes Antwort Schreiben.

OPEN LETTER.

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**By Ferdinand Lassalle.**

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GENTLEMEN:—You request me to give you my opinion of the workingmen's movement, and of the means best calculated to better the condition of the working classes, whether by political or moral action; and also to give you my views on the importance of the labor organizations of that portion of the people wholly without means; a duty I hasten to discharge.

In the first place, I beg to state that, my time being taken up by necessary labor, my reply must be brief.

In Berlin, October last, when the first consultation took place regarding the Workingmen's Congress, two opposite views appeared, the discussion of which, through the newspapers, elicited much interest.

One party insisted that you had no business to trouble yourselves about political movements, politics having no recognition of you as a factor in the national programme, your inferiority as a class giving you no importance or interest in the debate. The other side insisted as strenuously that you should array yourselves as a wing of the Prussian Progressive Party—to act the part of the chorus in its active drama, or as

a species of sounding-board to give greater resonance to the voice of the organization. Had I been present with that deliberative body, I should have spoken as equally opposed to both.

A narrow view indeed is it to look upon the movement as having no relation to politics. *I have no hesitation in saying that through political action only* can the working man hope for the fulfillment of his aspirations as a citizen. The question how you shall assemble and discuss your interests, how form associations and branch societies, is a question already dependent upon the political situation and legislation, making it quite unnecessary, by further exposition, to answer objections.

Not less mistaken and leading to error was the opposite view, placing you as a mere wing of the Progressive Party.

True, it would have been unjust not to recognize that the Prussian Progressive Party had, at the time, a moderate claim to political freedom through the firmness it exhibited in voting the budget, and its opposition to the military re-organization in Prussia. Granting the claims so founded, however, still the placing of you in so inferior a position would be inconsistent with your numerical importance and the gravity of the demands of the German Workingmen's Party: which manfully struggles for higher political principles and more popular aims than the Prussian Progressive Party. Its chief distinction is, that it plants its flag on the Prussian Constitution, and the chief feature of whose struggles is opposition to a one-sided change of the military organization, and holding on to the right of voting the budget, features of policy in other German countries not even questioned.

There was, besides, no guarantee that were the Progressive Party to succeed in its controversy with the Prussian Government, that it would use its victory in the interest of the whole people, many fearing that it would be quite as likely to use it to uphold the privileges of the bourgeoisie, and not to secure the universal, equal and direct right of suffrage for the working classes. In such a case, it is clear that it could not be of the least interest to the workingmen. At that time, that is what I should have had to say. To-day I can add that since then it has been clearly shown—which at that time it was not difficult to foresee—that the Prussian Progressive Party lacked the energy necessary to bring even so slight a conflict with the Government to a satisfactory and dignified end.

That party, notwithstanding the contemptuous refusal of the Government to surrender to it the right of voting the budget, still consents to assemble for parliamentary purposes, transacting business with a ministry declared criminally responsible, thus lowering itself and the entire people; exhibiting a spectacle of weakness and an absence of dignity without a parallel in the history of legislative bodies.

Even in spite of the violation of the Constitution, a violation so declared even by themselves, it still continued to assemble, helping the Government to uphold a fraud, a mere appearance of a constitutional state.

Instead of, as it ought to have done, declaring the Chamber closed until the Government declared itself unable to continue the expenditures refused by the Chamber, thus placing the Government in the inexorable alternative of either respectfully recognizing the constitutional right of the Chamber, or, boldly throwing off all appearance of such recognition, defying embarrassments, assume absolute rule, inviting the crisis imposed by absolutism. Notice the result of this cowed action on their part. The Government is so placed as to have all the advantage of absolute power with the added advantages of an apparently constitutional state.

The Government, instead of being forced to unveil absolutism, giving the people to understand that there was no constitutional warranty wanted for expenditures, has the appearance given to it of constitutional consent to its operations, thus duping the public, confusing the intelligence, and depraving the moral sense of the people.

A party capable of such pusillanimity, exhibiting such weakness, is powerless, inadequate to the work of the hour, and incapable of leading in the development of liberty; therefore unfitted to represent the democracy of the nation. It is unworthy to lead the great element constituting the workingmen's movement.

I would have to tell you then as I have to tell you now, that a party which, through its dogma of the "Prussian Front," forces itself to recognize in the Prussian Government the called-for Messiah for the birth of the German nationality, while there is, even inclusive of Hesse, not a single German Government politically behind Prussia; yes, while there is not a single German Government, even including Austria, which is, in reality, not ahead of the Prussian Government—to seek to

claim the leadership of the workingmen's party is a degradation, an illusion suggesting drunken impotence. Its surrender of manhood in the face of the contempt of the Government. puts aside all hopes of its leading in the direction of the liberty of the German people.

What has been said gives definitively the position to be assumed by the working classes in the matter of politics with reference to its relation to the Progressive Party.

*The working-class must constitute itself an independent political party, based on universal equal suffrage: a sentiment to be inscribed on its banners, and forming the central principle of its action.* The representation of the working class must be a fact in the legislative bodies of the nation. Nothing less will satisfy the awakened demands of the working classes.

We must open, for this end, a peaceful, lawful agitation. Let this be the programme of the party of labor, without reference to the Progressive Party. The workers must regard their organization as that of an independent party, utterly and completely separate and distinct from all political affiliation with the Progressivists; recognizing it only when their common interests bring them into copartnership at the polls.

This must be the policy of the Workingmen's Party. Whatever of leaning toward the Progressive Party will be made apparent, must be by the Progressivists coming up to their standard; giving them a chance either to develope, or to sink deeper in the mire of impotence—where it is already knee-deep. Such must be the tactics pursued by the Workingmen's Party toward the Progressive Party. So much for politics.

Now to the social question you have broached, and which interests you in a much greater degree.

I confess that it was with a grim smile I noticed that debates on free trade and free movement should form important features in the order of the projected Congress. Why you should seek to discuss free movement can best be answered by quoting Schiller's famous distich :

“For years I've been using my nose to smell;  
Who questions my right to my nose, pray tell?”

Free trade and free movement are matters which, in a law-making body, are quietly decreed without debating.

The German workin g men surely have no desire to repeat

the foolish spectacle of assemblages whose chief enjoyment seems to be to applaud aimless, long speeches. Surely the earnest resolution of the worker will spare us the exhibition of all such pitiable weaknesses.

You want to found Savings-banks, Invalid and Sick-help Societies; institutions whose relative but subordinate importance I readily recognize. Let us, however, try to distinguish between two questions which have nothing to do with each other.

Is it merely your aim to ameliorate the condition of the worker? guarding him against the results of recklessness, sickness, age and accidents; the unguarded effects of which press individuals below the ordinary condition of their class. If so, the establishment of such institutions will be fully equal to meet your aims. A movement of such magnitude as the universal agitation of the workingmen of the nation, however, would be far from finding its reward in accomplishing so little when so much could be done. It would but suggest the old saying: "The mountain labored, and brought forth a mouse."

So limited and subordinate an aim might be quietly left to local associations, they being quite equal to the attainment of such desiderata.

The aim of this movement has a wider scope than establishing beneficiary institutions for the afflicted individual. It is rather to raise the status of the class in the nation, redeeming it from the degradation of its present level.

Is not that the ultimate sought in this great movement? If so, then is the sharp line of distinction called for which I have drawn between the merely beneficiary idea and the larger scope of national interferences with the present order of society. The two features must not be confused. The institution of the first is powerless to the attainment of the second; making it imperative that the former shall be regarded as altogether outside of and apart from effort to accomplish the latter.

Allow me here to give you the testimony of a fellow workman, Prof. Huber, a man whose strictly conservative and royalistic tendencies would be likely to preclude from his writings any confessions in favor of the working-class proper; but whose candor and impartial judgment make him incapable of giving an unwarrantable complexion to truth. I delight

to give the evidence of this man—and in the course of this letter will do it again and again—and for the reason that, standing as he does on a different elevation from mine, whatever of suspicion might attach of my regarding what he would say as of smaller importance, through prejudice on my part, might be avoided. His views, politically as well as economically, are different from mine; but he possesses in an eminent degree the frankness to truthfully discuss, on national and economic grounds, the questions forced by the Liberal School; pointing to what, in his judgment, might mislead and disappoint the workingman.

In his "Concordia," Professor Huber says: "Without, then, overlooking the relative benefit, as far as it really goes, of Savings, Help and Sick societies, I insist that these good things can bring with them great negative hindrances, standing, as they may, in the way of something better."

And surely these negative hindrances alluded to never could take place to a greater degree as obstacles in the way of something better than with the forces of the workingmen's movement concentrated upon, or even shared with these projects.

But you should—say the newspapers—and this your own letter to me mentions as strongly recommended by many—take into consideration the organizations of Schultze Delitzsch—his Land and Credit Associations, his Raw Material and Consuming Associations—in order to better the condition of the working class.

Let us examine this a little more closely :

Schultze Delitzsch can be regarded in three relations :

In his politics he belongs to the Pro. Party already alluded to.

Secondly, he has claims as a national economist; standing as such upon the ground occupied by the Liberal School; sharing alike their errors, their mistakes and their blindness. The lectures he has given before the workingmen afford too convincing proofs of that charge: making his efforts a bundle of distorted presentations with conclusions having no connection whatever with the premises. However, it is neither your desire nor yet my aim to give a criticism of the theory of the National Economists or of the lectures of Delitzsch in particular, to prove how wide of the mark and self-blinding are the arguments used by that school of philosophers. My duty to

you however, forces me to dwell more at large on their doctrines.

The third relation alluded to, in which Delitzsch stands, is his peculiar individuality, which has the effect of forcing him beyond his theory as an economist of the National School: of him it can be said that, of his party, he is the only one who has really benefitted the people. Although standing alone, and at a time of unusual business depression, by his untiring activity, he became the father and founder of the German Co-operative Societies; giving them a push forward which will give a wide and spreading effect to that beneficent movement; and for which, although his opponent in theory, I now, while writing, in spirit shake hands with him. Truth and Justice, even to an opponent, ought to be the first lesson as well as the first duty of all men.

That, at this day, in the German movement the question is already discussed, whether the associations are to be taken up in his sense or mine, which is to a great part his true merit—a merit, we must admit we cannot too highly estimate. In the face of the warmth with which I recognize this merit, however, I shall insist on regarding with critical sharpness the question: Are the Schultze Delitzsch associations—the Credit, Loan, Raw Material and Consuming associations able, effectively, to better the condition of the working class? To which I reply, and with emphasis, No! And here I briefly state my reasons for my decided negative.

In regard to the Loan and Raw Material Associations, they assist him only who has a small business for himself. For the journey, men or workers in the factory, men having no business strictly of their own, those institutions are as if they did not really exist. This feature you must never lose sight of, that from the beginning, the aim of the being of these societies was to be serviceable only to small industries; not for the elevation of the whole. They will help employers with a capital, but are not intended to reach the Workingmen: In this connection you must impress yourselves with two pressing points:

First. It is in the nature of the industrial movement to give the factory, with its immense productive power, an extraordinary advantage over the small industries; so much so as to dwarf all efforts of the smaller producer. Wholesale and mass-production daily more and more taking the place of pro-

duction on a small scale. England and France, nations ahead of us in economical development, show this in a much greater degree than with us. Germany, however, is making mighty progress on the same road. Your daily experience will be sufficient to corroborate this.

There follows, then, from these Delitzsch Loan and Raw Material Associations, allowing they did help the small tradesmen, that owing to the necessarily expanding tendencies of our industries, they all constantly developing into rich firms and corporate institutions, their influence would all the while be lessening, the large firms and corporations gradually absorbing the lesser tradesmen, the recipients of their benefits, they gradually becoming sunk in the ranks of the purely working-class: an absorption the inevitable result of our peculiar modern culture.

The other point alluded to is still more important:

Notwithstanding the fact that a few tradesmen so assisted, are enabled to carry on a small business in living competition with the larger concerns, the confession of Prof. Huber is adverse to the Credit and Raw Material Associations as a successful means to ends. He says, "Unfortunately, despite our favorable perceptions that competition between dwarf-production and corporative industry was possible, we have to say that it is not satisfactorily so.

But the inherent defects of the system, and which, at the first, became developed in my mind, will, I am convinced, be still more conclusive.

How far, as an assistant, to the small tradesman, can the Loan Association go? Only so far as enabling him to have good and cheap raw material—no further; placing him on an equality with his competing neighbor who had already capital of his own with which to purchase. At best it is but lengthening the lease which, in time, must expire; yielding to the larger capitalist, whose mass-production, with its smaller profits and other advantages, stock and rule the markets. The principle sways civilization: the inferior corporation yielding to the larger.

It may be urged that the small tradesman who carries on his trade helped by the Raw Material Association has advantages over the capitalist who uses his own money, and is therefore better able to endure the strain of his heavy competition. We must bear in mind, however, that the wholesale price feature

is but one of a series of advantages of cheapness which inheres in industries conducted on a large scale.

But even between the master who carries on business with the help of the Raw Material Association and the one who conducts his work on his own capital, the advantages are very nearly balanced.

The latter has no interest to calculate upon, and can at all times place him self in connection with the best markets in the purchase of needed articles, giving him business chances the Raw Material Association cannot develope; particularly the knowledge which enables him to select minor articles.

The association spoken of can only lengthen out the unavoidable death struggle of the business life of the small tradesman; he is doomed to make way for the large concerns; the products of our increasing and changing culture. To seek to perpetuate the struggles of the smaller traders is but uselessly to obstruct the inevitable, while leaving the great body of the working class, employed in the larger works, entirely unreach- ed by assistance.

We shall now look at the Consumers Associations.

The whole body of the working class would be embraced by the consumer's association. But even these associations are powerless in any degree to better the condition of the worker.

Three reasons will be ample to prove this.

The disadvantages which lie upon the working class, (as the two following sub-divisions of the economical law will show,) strikes him as a producer and not as a consumer. It is surely a false step to assist the working class as consumers, when it is apparent that we ought to help them as producers; for it is as producers the shoe pinches. As consumers, we stand to day, in general, quite equal. As before the *gens d'armes* all citizens stand alike, so, in presence of the shop-keeper, the customer has no superior claims; all paying equally as well.

It is true that from this small paying ability on the part of the poor, certain special minor evils follow to the injury of the working class; the disadvantages forcing him to become a prey to the usury of shop-keepers. Against this economic feature the Consumers Association is a great protection. But without mentioning how long this Association can last and where it must stop, I contend that this assistance only makes the sad condition of the working class for the moment more endurable.

and I say that it must not be confused with the methods to better the condition of the working class, and which is the aim of the workingmen's movement to accomplish.

The merciless economical rule, under which the present system fixes the rate of wages, in obedience to the so-called law of supply and demand for labor is this : that the average wages always remain reduced to that rate which in a people is barely necessary for existence and propagation; a matter governed by the customary manner of living of each people. That is the inexorable point about which the real wages always gravitate; never keeping long above or below it. Were it to remain for any length of time above it, there would be an increase of marriages from which would flow a greatly increased number of the working element, which would invariably bring down the wages below its former rate.

The wages also cannot fall with anything like permanence below the ordinary rate of living; as from it would flow emigration, celibacy, restraint in the number of births; circumstances in the end lessening the number of laborers; an equilibrium is thus secured, keeping wages generally uniform; the wages being at all times in obedience to the vibrations. There is no gain saying the assurance that the wages of a people are regulated by their ordinary habits of living, those habits conforming to the limits of existence and propagation. This is the cruel, rigorous law that governs wages under the present system.

The truthfulness of this standard no man can question. I could call in support of my assertions names famous in national economical science even from the liberal school; for, truth to tell, it was the liberal economic school which discovered and proved the law.

Gentlemen, this cruel inflexible law you must at all times; have before you, impressing your souls with its terrible truth, and in all your thinking you must start with it as a perpetual presence.

And here I can give you and the whole body of the working people an infallible test by which all mistakes and errors can be avoided in your dealings with would-be leaders.

To every one who speaks of ameliorating the condition of the worker, you must put the question: whether or not he recognizes this law?

If he does not, at once say to yourself, he either desires

to mislead, or he has a pitiful degree of inexperience in national economical science. It is a fact that there is not, even in the liberal school, one noteworthy national economist who denies this : Adams, Smith, Say, Ricardo, Matthews, Bastiat, and John Stuart Mill; all of them unanimously acknowledged it; so, too, do all men of science.

And then, when he who speaks to you about the condition of the workingman, and returns in answer to your question that he does recognize this law, ask farther; How would he abolish this condition?

And if he gives you no answer upon this, quietly turn your back to him. He is, be assured, an empty talker who wishes to mislead you; or is himself a victim to hollow phrases. Let us for a moment look nearer at the effect and nature of the law. It is in other words substantially this : From the amount produced there is only so much taken and divided among the workingmen, as is necessary to their existence (wages), the entire surplus of the amount produced falling to the share of him who undertakes the enterprise.

It is therefore a consequence of the cruel, heartless law that you—who for that reason I have in my labor pamphlet called the class of the disinherited—are barred out from the increased productiveness brought about by the progress of civilization. For you comes a bare existence; the undertaker of the enterprise takes all that is produced.

Owing to the great increase of the productiveness of labor in modern times, many of the products falling to the minimum of cheapness, it becomes possible for you to have a certain degree of advantage from the excess of productiveness of labor—not as producers, but as consumers. It, however, does not change the quota or share of the amount produced; affecting you only in your condition as consumers, which it likewise does to the condition of the undertaker as a consumer, as well as to all who do not take part in the production;—benefiting them indeed, to a much greater degree than it does the workingman.

But this advantage which does not occur to you as laborers, but as human beings, vanishes again in course of time through this cruel and relentless law which lowers the wages to the measure of consumption necessary to a bare existence.

Now, it can happen to you that through increased productiveness of labor and the consequent appearance of the mini-

num of cheapness in many products, together with a lengthened period for increased demand for labor, disproportionally cheap products are taken up and regarded as customary necessities for a bare existence of the people.

Thus it is then that laborers and wages at all times dance upon the outer circle of the conditions constituting a bare existence—sometimes a little above, sometimes a little below, but seldom if ever changing.

This outer circle may change at different periods through the conjunction of the above given circumstances; and it is by comparing different periods with each other that the condition of the working classes in the later century and generation seems to be superior to that of former centuries and generations; and the whole history on the minimum amount necessary for an existence has arisen

Gentlemen, I was forced to make this small detour, distant though it may appear from my real object, because this trifling little benefit in course of centuries and generations is always the point upon which all who desire to throw dust into your eyes, after the manner of Bastiat, do so; which amounts to nothing but the hollowest declamation.

Remember my words. The time may arrive when the minimum amount necessary to sustain the laboring classes will, as compared with the amount of former generations, appear greater.

Whether it is really so that, in the flow of the centuries, the general condition of the working class has continuously been bettering, involves a very grave and entangling discussion, embracing much patient research: an amount of investigation, indeed, altogether too great for ordinary persons to take the trouble to master: necessitating endless inquiries about the prices of calico in one year as compared with others, and how much you now consume, with such-like common-place detail—items which can be found in any commercial compendium.

I shall not go into this investigation, but will confine myself to what is absolutely firm and also easily proven.

We will grant that the minimum amount thought necessary for an existence increases in the course of generations, and along with it comes a betterment of the condition of the working classes.

But you will be made to find, by a little effort on my

part, that, with these common-places, they play the real question out of your hands, making it an entirely different one.

They mislead; they blind you.

Gentlemen, when you speak of the condition of the working class and how it is to be bettered, you mean the condition of your fellow-beings of the present time compared with the standard of life's necessities enjoyed by other classes at the same time.

They answer you by assuming comparisons of your conditions with that of workingmen in former centuries. But the real question is, Do you stand better to-day because the minimum of necessities has risen over that of the workingmen of eighty—two hundred—or three hundred years ago? If so, how can it affect you any more than when told the settled fact that your condition to-day is superior to that of the Botokudes and man-eating savages?

All human enjoyment and contentment depend upon the proportion of the means of satisfaction of the customary necessities of the wants of life of the period. Or, which is the same, the surplus of the means of satisfaction and contentment over the lowest line of life's wants, customary and necessary at the time. An increased minimum of life's wants will bring with it sorrows and hardships which a former period knew nothing about.

It is no hardship to the Botokude that he can buy no soap; neither is it a hardship to the man-eating savage that he does not sport a respectable coat. What possible uneasiness was it to the workingman, before the discovery of America, that there was no tobacco to be had? or, before the era of printing, that no desirable book could be got?

All human hardships and sorrows depend, then, only upon the proportion of the means of contentment to the, at the time, present wants and customs of life. We measure our sorrows and hardships, our contentment and blessings, by the conditions of other classes at the period. It is because, at different periods of progress, added wants have sprung into existence, bringing desires formerly unknown into demand, that sorrows and hardships appeared.

Human conditions have ever been the same: dancing about upon the lowest circle of what, in every period, is customary and necessary to a bare existence—sometimes a little above, sometimes a little below it.

The standard has, at all times, remained substantially the same. The condition of man cannot be measured by the natural relations of the animals of the primal forest, nor yet the negro in Africa, nor the serf during the Middle Ages, nor even the workingman of two hundred or eighty years ago; but only through the relation of the condition of his fellow-workers to the condition of the other classes of the same time.

Instead of stating views about this, and discussing how this relation may be bettered, and how that cruel law may be changed, which holds you constantly upon the outer circle of the wants in every period, they amuse themselves by distorting the question beneath your very nose, entertaining you with problematical views of history, of culture, and the condition of the working class in former times: views all the more problematical: those products of industry falling to a minimum of cheapness, belonging, in a very marked degree, to the articles consumed by the workingman; while the food which chiefly forms this consumption, not at all governed by the same tendency to an ever increasing cheapness. Such views would only have value when the conditions of the entire working class, during the different periods, would be investigated in all directions, and from every point; investigations of the gravest nature, and to be carried to a degree of completeness for which those who present them have not the requisite qualities, such duties to be performed only by the really learned.

Let us now return from our necessary detour, to the question, What influence can the Consume Associations have upon the condition of the working class, after the law of Political Economy, formulated in Sub-Division 2?

The answer will be simple enough.

As long as only single circles of workingmen combine for a Consume Association, so long the general wages will not be affected by it; and just so long will these Consume Associations, through cheaper consumption, exert a subordinate influence, lightening the down-trodden conditions of the worker—a tendency I have already viewed and admitted.

It will be most important here to bear in mind that, so soon as the Consume Associations more and more embrace the whole working class, it will be seen, as a necessary consequence, that wages, owing to the cheapness of the necessaries of life,

the result of the Consume Associations, will fall in precise proportion.

These Consume Associations never can help the whole working class; while to the single circles of workingmen who form them, they can only give slight help, so long as their example does not find imitators. While these Consume Associations spread themselves, embracing larger masses, in that degree dwindles the trifling benefit which, under the most advantageous relations can accrue from them, until, embracing the large majority, it sinks to zero.

Can it be earnestly proposed that the workingmen should fix their eyes upon a means by which, as a class, they cannot be benefitted? which, in fact, can only assist a few, while the larger class stand by: and which, as soon as the majority seek to benefit by, at once is of no help to any one?

The German working classes, allowing themselves to begin with a tread-mill round, will find that any betterment of their condition will be in the very distant future.

I have now analyzed all the Schultze Delitzsch organization, showing you that they are not now, nor ever can be, of permanent service to you.

The question now is, Cannot the principle of free, individual association be applied so as to better the condition of the working class?

To that I reply, Without doubt it can. But only through applying it in the massed and concentrated forms of the factory, with its enormous advantage of productivity.

The working class must become itself a monster employer: the whole a series of gigantic enterprises. By this means and by this alone, can amelioration come, and the iron and cruel law governing wages be abolished.

The wages class, once become its own employer, the divisions between wages and profits of enterprise at once is removed: the wage disappears, and in its stead comes the certain and satisfying reward of labor honestly performed. The whole production of labor becomes the claim of the worker, unaffected by any employer.

This method of the abolition of the profits of enterprise is peaceful, legal, and, withal, simple. Through free associations, the working classes organize themselves as their own employers, and, by the simple act, emancipate themselves from the system which gave the working class wages, at all times.

but a small part of the entire product: not more than is barely sufficient to support life, while the surplus falls to the share of the employing class, making them rich. Be assured that this is the only true method of release for the working class, all others being specious and illusory.

But how is the change to be effected? Throwing a glance upon the railroads, the dry docks, the cotton spinneries, the calico factories and such like formidable institutions; then, dwelling for a moment on the enormous amount of capital needed, you will see in your empty pockets nothing but mockery of the suggested design. Where, you exclaim, are the millions to come from to inaugurate this projected system of the future? You stand appalled at the threshold of your enterprise. To you nothing can be more apparent than your helplessness. If left to yourselves, you are indeed without help.

For this very reason, it is the duty and becomes the business of the State to come to your rescue, to enable you to expedite and give form and vitality to the scheme so promising of betterment to the working class of the nation. The State ought to regard it as its holiest duty to assist in making certain the possibility of your self-organization and association; for in your elevation lies the secret of the grandeur and completeness of the State.

And here do not allow yourselves to be misled by the cries of those who say that all interventions of the State must necessarily weaken social self-help. It does not follow that I hinder a man from reaching a certain elevation in climbing a steeple because I reach him a ladder or a rope to assist him. Shall it be said that the State seeks to suppress self-effort in study because it establishes schools, hires teachers and opens libraries to facilitate instruction? Can I be accused of putting impediments in the way of a man who seeks to cultivate a farm by lending him a modern plow? And surely it cannot be said that I am anxious to defeat an enemy when I put weapons into the hands of others for the destruction of that enemy.

I admit that single individuals have educated themselves without teachers, schools or libraries; it is true that people have been known to climb steeples without the aid of ladders or ropes. It is true that the peasantry of Vendee, in the Revolutionary war, defeated their enemies without weapons.

All these exceptions, however, do not weaken the rule ; they but strengthen it. Neither does it affect the rule that under certain circumstances, single circles of workingmen in England, through organizations founded solely by their own exertions, have bettered their conditions in a small degree. In the face of these exceptions there remains to be accomplished the real improvement of the condition of labor embracing the entire class, and which can only be done through help advanced by the State.

Do not allow yourselves to be affected and misled by the affected contempt of those who decry Socialism and Communism ; such cheap talk cannot permanently affect your demands, and is used only by such as desire to mislead you or who do not know what they are talking about.

Nothing can be farther apart from Communism than is this demand of the workingmen to the State. It will not affect the individual freedom of the citizen in any manner whatever ; each retaining in all essential particulars, his present relations to the community. His personal manner of life undergoes no change, save in the difference of his remuneration, the result of his changed conditions by his new relations to the State:—advancing him capital ; or, in other words, necessary credit.

Really and truly this is the mission of the State: to expedite and assure the advance of culture. For this the State exists, and for this only. It has already given abundant evidence that this is its characteristic work—its canals, its highways, its post-offices, its boat lines, its telegraphs, its national banks. Without the intervention of the State such institutions could not exist ; or, if existing, they would be productive of ceaseless wrangles by competition.

I give you an example that outweighs hundreds that might be presented ; an example, too, dating from our own times : When railroads began to be built, it was found necessary in Germany, as well as in many other countries, for the State to intervene in one way or another, guaranteeing the payment of interest on stock ; and in some countries much greater responsibilities were assumed.

It would be well here to mention that the English, who are always pointed to as a people opposed to State interferences, boast with commendable pride of the intervention of the State in abolishing slavery ; an act of parliament author-

izing the expenditure of twenty million pounds sterling, (\$100,000,000,) for that purpose. To free an unlimited majority of its own nation from the cruel law that governs wages in their country ought surely be expected to interest them still more than freeing a strange race in a strange land.

In this connection I would also point to the example of the United States, presenting with such unexampled liberality by subsidies of land to forward railroad enterprise.

The guarantee of the interest alluded to above, so forcibly reminding one of the phrase, "the lion's share," amounted to neither more nor less than this: Should the new enterprise prove unprofitable, the State must bear the loss; that is, you, the taxpayers, shall pay the deficit. If, on the other hand, the thing should be a success, the dividends, no matter how heavy, shall accrue to the rich stockholders. In some countries, particularly Prussia, this feature is sought to have a modified appearance given to it by reserving certain assumed advantages to be derived in the very far future; advantages which can only become such through the workingmen associating for ameliorative purposes, and being felt as a factor in the politics of the nation.

Without the intervention on the part of the State—of which it may be said the guarantee of payment of the interest was the smallest feature—it is extremely likely we should have had no railroads on this continent to-day. In any case, this fact is not to be disputed, that the Government, in guaranteeing the interest, was a reliable inducement to the rich property holders who control capital, to take hold. It was clearly a case of State assistance to the Bourgoise; and if extended to one class why not to another equally willing to honorably profit by it.

How was it that no cry arose against the interest guarantee as an improper intervention of the State? Why was it not declared that the guarantee of the State was not denounced as undue interference of self-help on the part of the rich stock companies? Above all, why was not the guarantee of the State stamped as Socialism and Communism? The question is readily answered: The intervention was in the interest of the rich, the property holding class of society, deference to whom has always been regarded as correct. It can only be when the intervention is sought to be in favor of the poverty-stricken that Communism is raised as a mad

dog cry.

Let what I have said, then, answer for those who speak to you of the impropriety of State intervention, condemning it as threatening the principle of self-help and favoring Socialism and Communism, which they say underlies the demand. Give them to understand that, having lived so long in Socialism—as proved by guaranteeing the interest on the railroad and other instances hastily touched upon, we desire to benefit by its advantages in a still greater degree.

It may be added that great though the progress of culture was made made manifest by the introduction of railroads, it would sink into insignificance compared to the advance civilization would show in the same space of time by the elevation of the working class through their industrial association by State aid.

For, what do all the heaped-up riches and all the fruits of civilization benefit the community when they are used by only a few? leaving unlimited humanity the Tantalus of the ages, reaching in vain for what forever eludes the grasp: worse, indeed than Tantalus, for he had not assisted in cultivating the fruits for which his thirsting tongue was damned to long for. The elevation of the working class ought to be regarded as the grandest achievements of culture, therefore warranting the highest efforts of the State in the accomplishment.

It is to be added that the State, through the agency of the ordinary credit and money circulating institutes, (the banks) may, in the easiest possible manner, perform the needed duties of assistants to the Government in its new relation to us, and without taking upon themselves any greater responsibility than was assumed in accepting guarantees for the payment of the interest of railroads.

How easily the necessary capital, or, credit, rather, might be procured for the gradual association of the entire working-class, cannot be further shown here, as it would involve explanations of the theoretical, financial and social functions of money and credit. Furthermore, such an explanation of the method as would be necessary, would be superfluous, because not called for. Not till it can have a practical value by initiating the realization of the demands will this become a duty.

From the nature of things, these associations can only gradually, and in process of time, embrace the entire work-

ingclass. They would have to begin in such districts and localities where certain occupations center, where the density of the population and the known disposition for association would be likely to forward such.

As soon as a number of such associations would be formed, securing the aid of the State, their existence would make it easier to introduce them to other branches of industry, which, when combined, would form a chain of credit with relation to one another. Beside this credit association, an insurance association might embrace the different co-operative associations, equalising all business losses and making them but scarcely felt. The State would be in no case forced to play dictator to these societies; its duties ceasing after supplying the stability needed through statutory enactments; all control being vested in the organizations themselves; thereby conducting the business exclusively by the members; so insuring safety.

The ordinary journeyman's wages would be paid weekly, while the whole business profits of the association would be distributed in the form of dividends. The practicability and the lucrative productivity of such associations can be questioned only by those who are totally ignorant of the fact that workingmen's associations already numerous exist in England and France; sprung into being it is true under adverse circumstances and solely by the isolated exertions of the working men, yet having attained a high degree of prosperity. Already, in the county of Lancashire—passing by the so-called pioneers of Rochdale—there existed thirty-three such associations organized on the plan of the Factory method of production; and although but lately founded they have declared a dividend of thirty to forty per cent. on the capital invested: There are besides, associations of *ouvrières maçons* in Paris, who presented a business exhibit in 1856 to 1857, showing a profit of 56 per cent. on their capital; in 1858 the business profit was 130,000 francs; of which 30,000 francs were added to the reserve and the surplus 100,000 francs divided as a dividend; furthermore, sixty per cent. of this fell to the share of labor, and forty per cent. to the share of the capitalist, (this association has *associés non travailleurs* who each invest at least 10,000 francs.) A like prosperity is exhibited by the *ouvriers lampistes*, also by the *ouvriers en meubles* and others. See history of workingmen's associations in the

works of Prof. Huber, Cochut, Lemer cier (*Etudes sur les associations ouvrières.*) The statutes and rules of these co-operative shops also contribute valuable information concerning the internal economy of these associations. Regarded from the standpoint of the philosopher, these societies are the promises of the future; the work of hard-palmed, clear souled men who through the dim vista of the coming generations saw humanity's possibilities. If so much, then, can be accomplished, not only unaided, but in the face of immense opposition and ridicule, it becomes an easy task by the aid of the State, to achieve the entire redemption and permanent elevation of the workingclass. And to that complexion it must come at last. Blind indeed must that man be who fails to see in the history and development of the years the unswerving swing of humanity toward the conditions aimed at by these associations.

Gentlemen; as a finale, let us now consider the question: What is the State?

In response, I ask you to cast a glance at the official statistics published by the Government—for I do not purpose to appear with my own calculations merely.

The official statistical bureau of the kingdom of Prussia, superintended by the King's secret councillor, Prof. Dieterici, published in 1857, founded upon the official tax list, shows how the population was divided in regard to income, (Prof. Dieterici's Statistical Bureau, year 1851, VOL. IV, P. 262; compare VOL. III, P. 243.)

I place the results of this calculation before you with the exact words and figures.

As there exhibited, one-half per cent. of the population of Prussia has an income of 1,000 thalers.

Three and one-fourth per cent. from 400 to 1,000.

Seven and one-fourth per cent. from 200 to 400.

Sixteen and three-fourths per cent. from 100 to 200.

Seventy-two and one-fourth per cent. below 100.

And this income falls upon the heads of the taxable portion of the population who, according to Dieterici, represent upon the average a family of five persons or at least three persons. \*

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\*NOTE.—There existed in Prussia at that time (1850,) as Dieterici shows—VOL. IV, P. 223; 16,331,187 souls, and 3,181,968 families, giving 5 and one-tenth persons for an average family. Tax-

And naturally the same analogy must exist in all the other German States.

These dumb official figures, if they do not claim mathematical exactness, every one, as you know, belittling his income before the tax-gatherer—a matter of no importance in this relation, it not in the least degree giving grounds for difference—will speak to you more distinctly than would whole volumes.

Seventy-two and one-fourth per cent. of the population with an income below 100 thalers; showing them, as a consequence, to be in the most miserable condition.

Another sixteen and three-fourths per cent. of the population, with an income of from 100 to 200 thalers a few degrees above misery. Another, seven and one-fourth per cent with an income of 200 to 400 thalers still in cramped conditions. Three and one-half per cent. with an income of 400 to 1000 thalers, in a comparatively comfortable position; and finally one-half per cent. in all possible degrees of wealth. The two lowest classes who are in the wretched, downtrodden condition form 89 per cent. of the whole population, and if we must add the seven and one-fourth per cent. of the third class, still in a cramped condition, comparatively without means, we find 96 and one-fourth per cent. of the entire number helpless and poverty stricken.

Now, gentlemen, remember this: It is to you, you the suffering, the patient and enduring class, that the State belongs; not to us of the higher classes; *for the State is the consolidated people.* I asked you what was the State, and you have found through a few figures, a more comprehensive answer than many books could give; I repeat it, you, the people, make the State.

I now emphatically ask, why should not your large associations develop and guide to fruition the smaller circles of associations?

This question you also will discuss with those who twaddle to you about the impropriety of State interference, and of the socialism and the communism inherent in the demand.

Finally, if you desire an especial clause to prove the im-

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able persons at that time, (see Dieterici, VOL. III, P. 243,) 4,950,454, as you see, more than there were families. Still, according to this, the taxable head represents an average family of three persons, not allowing that the lowest classes have the largest families.

possibility of bettering the condition of the entire working class, except through the co-operation of the State, aiding the free associations, look at England, the country upon which the other side chiefly rely for proof of their assertion that it is possible to bring about this improvement by limited numbers of individuals in co-operative efforts, independent of outside aid.

It seems to be regarded that England, for many reasons rooted in its peculiar conditions, is the best fitted to successfully try this experiment—the fact, however not proving the possibility of other countries to do the same.

The especial proof referred to with reference to England, points distinctly to the workingmen's associations which, up to this time, have been given as so conclusive. I mean the pioneer movement of Rochdale. Existing since 1844, this consume association founded a spinnery and weaving mill, with a capital of £5,500, in 1858. In the statutes of this co-operative association, an equal share of the business profits or dividend, besides the local market price for labor (wages,) was assured to all the workingmen busied in the factory, whether stockholders in the association or not; it having been decided that the yearly dividends should be equally divided, and apportioned to labor-price or wages, as upon the capital stock.

Here let me say that the number of stockholders in the factory amounted to 1,600, while the number of workingmen busied in it were only 500. There was, therefore, quite a number of stockholders who were not at the same time working in the factory; at the same time all the workmen were not stockholders. In 1861, an agitation arose from those who were merely stockholders, backed by some who were both stockholders and workmen, against the rule that the workingmen who were not stockholders should receive a share of the business profit—the product of labor.

From the side of the stockholder, the argument advanced openly and simply, was, that according to the universal custom in the industrial world, labor was fully paid with the wages alone; and that this wage was fixed by the law of supply and demand. (We have seen above by what law.) “This fact,” says Prof. Huber, in the report which he gives of the circumstance, “from the beginning was presented as the necessary, natural state of things, needing no further motive nor

strengthened claim of legitimacy. True, up to this time, the custom in the factory was strictly according to the statutes, but was regarded as exceptional, impulsive. Bravely, but without clear reasons, arguments founded mainly on the feelings, the sensibilities, this motion was battled for by the old founders and Trustees of the association. True to the instincts of the possessor, a majority of five-eighths of the workmen stockholders voted to change the statutes—acting precisely as would the Bourgeoisie in a similar enterprise. The defeat was only for the present, however, as a majority of three-fourths of the votes was necessary.

“But nobody,” further reports Prof. Huber, “flatters himself that the thing has been settled. On the contrary, violent, internal struggles are in the future of such associations; doubtless, occasion will lead to discussion of the motion next year; the opposition being resolved to make its influence felt in the election for officers, where a majority vote decides, and where the domineering tendencies of the Trustees are likely to capture the opposition.”

Prof. Huber further reports of this: “A majority of the manufacturing productive associations have, from the beginning, conformed to the universal custom, and undoubtedly without regard to the doctrine involved; a very few, indeed, have adopted the co-operative principle in favor of labor.” And Prof. Huber must confess, however against his will, and with a heavy heart—for he is a disciple of the idea that association should come only through the individual efforts of workmen: that it is a question which will, doubtless, soon come to be discussed and decided in all other associations for production, where the opposition of capital and labor exists, and where is felt the competition eternally reproduced in the industrial microcosm, (the organized world,) and as represented by the workingmen’s associations on a small scale.

You see, gentlemen, that when you reflect upon these facts, you find great questions are, at all times, solved in a great manner; never by inferior agencies. So long as the general wages are governed by the above law, so long the small associations of workingmen will be unable to resist its influence. Where is the gain to the workingman in working for either fellow-workmen or Bourgeoisie? There is none. In what can he possibly benefit by changing his employer? Nothing. You have merely changed the claimants to the re-

sults of your labor. You are in no wise freed. Where is the gain to be seen? There is no gain—unless gain is to be seen in the added depravity which changes the workingman in the associated form into the worst form of master. The person engaged in the enterprise alone has changed, the system has undergone no alteration; labor, the source of all wealth, being confined to the old status of wages: barely sufficient to keep a man alive. It is easy, under certain conditions, for the understanding to become confused; as witness the greed under the influence of this law, making workingmen, on becoming stockholders, not employed in the factory, unwilling to recognize the fact that they are enjoying the advantages of the labor of others: opposed, even, to allowing them a share apart from the gain of their own labor, even to grudging them that upon which labor has a just claim.

Workingmen with means of labor and having a greed of enterprise! this is the disgusting caricature into which the stockholding laborer has been changed.

Finally, for a last, decided proof in this discussion:

You saw that in this factory of the pioneers, 500 workmen were busied, and that 1,600 stockholders had an interest in it. This much will also be apparent to you, that unless we can succeed in mocking ourselves with the delusion of all laborers being rich, that the number of workmen employed in a factory never will succeed, out of their own profits, to furnish the principal stock or capital necessary for a factory. They will find it impossible to resist the conclusion, that the admission of a greater number of stockholders, not employed in the factory, would be imperatively called for.

The proportion in this relation in the factory of the pioneers—1,600 stock holding workmen out of the factory, against 500 workmen engaged in the factory.—as three to one, is most favorable, and indeed rarely so: quite as small as could possibly be found to be; and is explained partly by the exceptionally comfortable condition of the organization, and partly through the fact that their peculiar branch of industry does not belong to those demanding a large amount of capital and also, because the factory does *not* belong to a mammoth, productive institution, in which case it would be very different. Finally, there is to be added, that, through the development of industry itself, and the progress of civilization, this proportion must continue to increase every day. It must

be evident to every one, that the progress of industry consists in the application of more force and more machinery put in the place of human labor, and that through this is the amount of capital stock made to increase over human labor. When, then, in this factory of the pioneers, 1,600 workingmen-stockholders were needed to contribute the necessary amount of capital to employ 500 workers, making a proportion of one to three, then by the workingmen in other branches, and in the larger institutions of production, together with the daily progress of civilization, the proportion would vary—as 1 to 4, 1 to 5, to 6, to 8, to 10, to 20, and so on. But let us remain at the proportion of 1 to 3. To found a factory in which 500 workmen find employment, there are needed 1,600 stockholders to furnish the necessary capital.

This is well enough, so long as I wish to found only a few factories. Gentlemen, in the imaginative process there is no trouble. I can tripple and quadruple the number and still go on while I have working men stockholders to help me. But when I extend these associations till the whole body of workingmen of the nation are embraced, where shall I find three, four, five, ten, twenty times the number of workingmen stockholders who are to stand behind the laborers employed in the factories and furnish the capital?

It will be easy to perceive that it becomes a mathematical impossibility to free the working class through the efforts of its members; and that all argumentt used to prove the contrary are mere illusions—phantasms of the brain. It will be equally apparent that the only road to successful abolishment of the law which governs wages, and which regulates as with a rod of iron, is the progress and development of free individual labor associations through the helping hand of the State.

The labor movement, founded upon the purely atomic isolated strength of working individuals has had its value, and an immense one it is, to unmistakably show the way how the emancipation may take place: practical proofs removing all doubts, real or assumed, of the practicability of the Idea; so compelling the State to see its duty in upholding by its assistance, the higher interests of the nation through the culture of its members.

At the same time I have proven to you that the State is really the great organization and association of the working-

men, the central point of help and protection, holding the smaller associations in hand by a series of functionaryism: This is the natural and legitimate purpose of the State: operating by supervision over each subordinate association as each subordinate association does toward its members.

But how enable the State to make this intervention?

The answer is clear: It is possible only through universal and direct suffrage.

When the law making body of Germany owes its existence to the popular vote, then, and only then will you be able to control the Government in the interest of labor.

When this element of popular power shall have been introduced and the law-making power be the result, then the necessary forms and measures of the intervention may be discussed; and, backed by reason and science, men who understand your condition, and who are devoted to your cause will defend your interests. Then, too, the class without means will have to ascribe all disastrous elections to themselves, finding their representatives in the minority.

Universal and direct suffrage, as has been shown, is the foundation of your political and social life: the basic principle of all self-help. and without which the condition of the workingman cannot be bettered.

Now, how to succeed in securing universal direct suffrage:

Cast a glance at England! For more than five years did the English people agitate against the corn laws; and so earnest and general was the agitation that they were abolished even by a Tory ministry. In like manner you workingmen of Germany must organize as a universal workingmen's association, peacefully but untiringly demanding continual agitation for the introduction of the universal and direct right of suffrage throughout all German countries—And mark my words: at the moment this combined movement reaches 100,000 members, it will be an acknowledged power in the land and already a factor affecting the legislative bodies. Raise this cry in every workshop, in every village, in every hut. Let the city workman, with their deeper insight and higher culture, pour into the ear of their brethren of the rural districts, by debates and speeches their knowledge and experience, till mechanic and agricultural laborer, joining in the chorus of demands, compel the Government to grant the right insisted on.

By debate and discussion, daily, and without cessation, was the great English agitation a success; by the same means alone will universal suffrage be gained in Germany. The more the echo of your voices is heard, the less will be the opposition to the pressure. And as auxiliary to your movement, found treasuries to which every member of the association must contribute to defray expenses of plans of organization.

Along with these treasuries—which, despite the smallness of the contribution, will form a power for agitation purposes, enabling you to have the daily papers to repeat the same demands, proving the rightfulness of your claims to deliverance from our present social condition.

Spread with the same means pamphlets. Also pay agents to carry the same views into every corner of the nation that the cry may reach the heart of every workingman, every householder, every agricultural laborer. Pay out of these means to all such workingmen who may suffer persecution and injury because of their activity in the cause. Let your voices continually be heard; in season and out of season; perpetual, never tiring; in place and out of place: a continual presence, compelling men to listen. The more repeated the more it will spread, and become mighty in the land.

All the art of practical success is contained in the secret to concentrate force at one spot, the vital and important point. In your propaganda look neither to the left side nor to the right. Be deaf to all but universal and direct suffrage or that which is connected with it and that leads to it.

When you have really established in the national mind this demand, and which in a few years you may succeed in doing through the 89 to 96 per cent. of the population which constitutes the proportion of the poorer classes in society, then will your wishes no longer be sought to be withheld. The Government may quarrel and struggle over political rights with the Bourgeoisie. They may even refuse you political rights; deny you even under the ordinary pressure felt in political legislation, the right of suffrage. But a question brought before Parliament backed by 89 to 96 per cent. of the people clamoring for its passage as a bill: a question affecting the national life: a question of stomach and brains, and hot with the vitalities of both, no power can long withstand. Gentlemen, no authority can resist this.

Universal and direct suffrage!

This is the sign and symbol by which you conquer.  
There is no other for you.

With Greeting and Hand Grip,

FERDINAND LASSALLE.

*Berlin, March 1, 1863.*

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