
Socialism, Revolution, & Civilization.

by Victor L. Berger

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Some Democratic and Republican politicians sneer at the Socialists because we are "idealists."

The others claim that we are as a whole "pretty good fellows," but utterly "impractical."

Now, what is Socialism? Socialism is defined as the collective ownership of the social means of production and distribution. It is the name given to the next stage of civilization, if civilization is to survive.

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As a matter of fact, the centralization of the control of property in a few hands is increasing with a rapidity that threatens the existence of civilization.

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Within a short time we shall have two nations in every civilized country, and especially in America — both of native growth.

One nation will be very large in number, but semi-civilized, half-fed, half-educated, and degenerated from overwork and misery; the other nation will be very small in number, but overcivilized, overfed, overcultured, and degenerated from too much leisure and too much luxury.

What will be the outcome?

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Some day in the near future and soon after the war or — if the war lasts long enough — even while the war is still on — there will be a volcanic eruption. The hungry millions will turn against the overfed few. A fearful retribution will be enacted on the capitalist class as a class — and the innocent will suffer with the guilty.

Such a revolution will retrograde civilization — it might throw back the white race into barbarism.

Let us heed the warning of recent history.

Let us profit by understanding what has happened in Russia. The danger is nowhere any greater than in England, France, and Italy.

And there will undoubtedly be a revolution in Germany and Austria — although we have had no reliable news from there for the last three years.

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Every honest and practical man — and every genuine patriot who can think — ought to say to himself the following:

The machinery and progress in the implements of production today we do not want to destroy and we can not destroy, if we are to have civilization. Modern humanity does not intend to go back to the barbarism of the middle ages.

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But as long as the instruments of produc-

tion — land, machinery, raw materials, railroads, telegraphs, etc. — remain private property, only comparatively few can be sole owners and masters thereof. And so long as such is the case, they will naturally use this private ownership for their private advantage.

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The present system was a step in the evolution of freedom, but only a step — it has already resulting in making comparatively few the absolute masters of our daily bread.

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There is but one deliverance from the rule of the people by capitalism — and that is the rule of capital by the people.

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If so much of what has been considered private property is to be absorbed in great monopolistic ownership — and there is nothing that can stop it — then, if we are to remain a politically free people, the inevitable outcome will be that the people must take possession collectively of the social means of production and distribution.

And this is called Socialism.

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It is simply a matter of growth and of evolution. Yet we must not forget that though society is truly an organism, the evolution of society does not take place precisely like the growth of plants and animals. The former is the result of efforts consciously put forth; the progress of man requires the cooperation of men. Therefore, while it is true that Socialism will be the outcome of economic conditions, if civilization is to survive, we must see to it that civilization does survive.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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