

A LATTER DAY LUDDITE

The Public Servant of Capital Gives Expression to Economics That Assume Capitalism Will Put an End to the Competition of the Out-of-Work—The Situation From a Socialist Standpoint.

The capitalist regards the working class from two distinct aspects, the economic and the political. From the one standpoint it represents so much labor power, that necessary and all-important element in the production of profit. On the other hand, it represents a mass of voting cattle to be deluded and cajoled into its support at the ballot to the political supremacy of the master class. In order to complete the overthrow of the quasifeudal bureaucracy the capitalist found it necessary to enlist the support of the working class, and to grant it the franchise. Now that this end has been attained, and the class war between the landed aristocrat and the industrial bourgeois has come to a close in the almost complete victory of the latter, the efforts of the ruling classes are centered upon the task of diverting the attention of the proletariat from the bitter class antagonism of to-day—the struggle between capital and labor. And the bourgeois politician, keenly alive at all times to the interests of his class, is well aware of the importance of this. For once the worker becomes convinced of the fact that the interests of himself and of his master are mutually opposed, that the wealth of the capitalist from the Sardanapalian luxury of the trust magnate to the Brixton villa and the cushioned pen of the smaller fry, creates and finds its complement in the misery and degradation of the worker, then he enters upon a train of thought which necessarily brings him into the ranks of the militant Socialist movement working, agitating and fighting for the entire overthrow of the robber class. Thus it is that the Socialist movement from Japan to San Francisco, from Great Britain to the Antipodes, wherever it is real and virile, and has not acquired

the name under false pretenses, proclaims with tireless insistence the fact of the class struggle, and demands its recognition a necessary condition of intelligent and logical political activity on the part of the working class. The politician is well aware of the danger of this knowledge, and shapes his course accordingly. To speak openly on the public rostrum of troops and guns and batons as media of strike settlement, to denounce "the tyranny of trade unions" (classic phrase!), to inveigh against professions of starving unemployed as public nuisances that ought to be dispersed by police charges, that each unit might creep into its hole to die like a wounded beast—that would be highly impolitic—and would inevitably force ugly conclusions upon the working class voter. Far other is the policy of the political servant of capital. To him the worker is a dear friend and brother, whose interests are dearer to him than his own. Thus it is that in the lobbies of the House of Commons there are to be found, gorgeously apparelled in silk-hatted, frock-coated magnificence, "Labor" members of the Burt, Fenwick, and Pie-ward clan, patronised and smiled upon by the most inveterate enemies of the working class, whose toadies and accomplices they are. The game of the capitalist is, while conserving and extending his own interests on all sides, to display at the same time an overwhelming solicitude for the working class in everything that is trifling, inessential, and worthless. He sets himself to daily with what he calls the social problem, especially at times when the evils which oppress the proletariat become more than usually clamant, and to engage public attention upon trumpery and ineffective schemes of reform whereby the real source of the evil escapes notice. It was in this spirit that the House of Commons set itself to discuss the Unemployed Question a few days ago.

It is necessary for us to enter upon statistics to show the magnitude of the unemployed evil. Even the capitalist press, after denouncing and deriding it with all the savage vindictiveness and brutal cynicism of the class it represents, has been forced into a tardy admission of its existence. Rather let us consider the causes which bring into existence this unemployed section of the working-class. To do so we must look back to the origin of the capitalist system in society of the 16th and 17th centuries. We find that capitalism came into existence along with the dissolution of the craft guilds and the confiscation of common and monastic lands. Prior to that the craftsman and peasant, owning his own tools or secure in the tenure of his land, was his own master, free from all exploitation, save the relatively mild exactions of the feudal superior—a tax from which the craftsman had in most cases freed himself. Both were masters of their own labor and its products. The events which we have just alluded to had the effect of throwing into the towns a large mass of proletarian propertyless workers, and thus became possible for the nascent bourgeoisie to employ these men as proletarian workers. The difference between the old craftsman and the new proletarian was, that whereas the former was in possession of his tools and his product, the latter possessed neither. What he produced went to his master, who gave him a wage, which was the competition of his fellows brought down to the cost of living, the difference between the wage and the value of the product representing the master's profit. In the succeeding centuries the expropriation of the peasantry went on apace, supplying an ever-increasing unemployed army. The introduction and development of machinery produced the same effect to a much greater degree. It decreases the amount of labor required, so that the wages are kept down by the greater competition of the unemployed and the lower cost of subsistence. At the outset, it must be observed that an unemployed reserve is a necessary component of capitalist society. It is as necessary to capitalism as the Voltairian Deity was to the 18th century Deists. If it did not exist it would be necessary to create it. This is admitted by the capitalist economists themselves. If there should be an exact equivalence of the workers available,

and of the numbers required by the capitalist, then wages would rise so high as to wipe out the profit of the latter. This is the reason why the Queensland and the New Zealand capitalists went to the expense of paying Mr. Ben Tillett and others not so well known to give lectures to induce the English workers to emigrate to these countries at a time when the unemployed competition was not sufficiently keen to suit their interests.

Many and various are the schemes that have been invented to solve this problem. More than a hundred years ago, when machinery was introduced into the textile industry, the result to the working class was unparalleled misery, thousands being thrown out of work, and the wages of those retained reduced to starvation level, while the hours of labor were largely increased. At this point a half-witted lad called Ned Ludd was the unconscious originator of a drastic scheme of reform, of considerable historic importance, because of the fact that the error that lay at its root has been copied by every succeeding reformer who attempted to deal with the question. In a fit of rage Ned destroyed some stocking looms, and inspired by his example bands of unemployed mechanics went through the country with the cry, "Men, not machines," destroying machinery wherever they found it. Of course, this plan was reactionary, foolish, and impracticable, and was easily suppressed by the authorities. The mistake lay in failing to see that the evil was due not to machines, but to the private ownership of them, and that the only remedy was their collective ownership by the working class. The latest of the many disciples of Ludd is Mr. Keir Hardie, M. P., who, in his speech on the amendment to the King's speech on the unemployed, showed that all the experience of the industrial and political life of the last century or more had brought him no further forward than the crazy Yorkshire lad. And yet when we remember that Mr. Hardie in his election address informed the Merthyr Tydvil Non-Conformists that he had learned his Socialism from the New Testament (date 1st or 2d century A. D.), the wonder is that he has advanced so far, and we are disposed to ask what text-books he studied, which have enabled him to bridge the intervening sixteen odd centuries. Certainly not a single word of his speech had the slightest bearing upon the Socialism which he is said to profess. There was nothing in his speech that could not have been said by the mildest and flabbiest of Radicals. He did not attack the system nor the dominant class, neither did he show that the evil of unemployment was inherent in capitalism. On the contrary, he assumed that the capitalist class, whose profits require the competition of the unemployed, would help him to put an end to the evil. He also implied that it could be put an end to without the abolition of capitalism. We need not enter into his proposals, which were simply a rechauffe of the old "Back to the land" nostrum. They are sufficiently exposed when we point out that they proposed to solve in capitalism and with the help of capitalism evil inherent in, and necessary to capitalism. Across the chasm of years Ned Ludd and Mr. Jas. Keir Hardie, M. P., join hands.

We can hardly quit this subject without drawing the attention of our readers to one priceless gem of economic lore, which Mr. Keir Hardie bestowed upon the world in the course of his speech. He said that if the wages of the working class were raised five per cent, the consequent increase in consumption would be the means of giving employment to all those out of work. This, like Mr. Hardie's party in the House of Commons, is a "non sequitur," it doesn't follow. Observe what it amounts to. Wages are low because of the competition of the unemployed. Mr. Hardie says, if wages were high (which only a reduction of the numbers of the unemployed could effect), there would be no unemployed! It would be just as helpful to say that if the Demonstration Committee were to take Loch Lomond to Tartarus they could exploit the thirst of dead and famished capitalists by selling it at a shilling per glass, and so form a prodigious fund for the relief of those out of work.

O rare economist!—T. R. in the Edinburgh Monthly Socialist.

SOCIALISM AND ATHEISM

Comrades in Arms of His Holiness, the Pope, and the Hierarchy of the Catholic Church—The Socialist Attitude on Religion—A Private Matter, Whose Discussion Is Forbidden at Meetings.

Perhaps upon no point are the doctrines of Socialism so much misunderstood, and so much misrepresented, as in their relation to religion. When driven into a corner upon every other point at issue; when from the point of view of economics, of politics or of morality he is worsted in argument, this question of religion invariably forms the final entrenchment of the enemy of Socialism—especially in Ireland.

It is a curious and instructive fact that almost all the prominent propagandists of freethought in our generation have been, and are, most determined enemies of Socialism. The late Charles Bradlaugh, in his time the most aggressive freethinker in England, was to the last resolute and uncompromising in his hatred of Socialism; G. W. Foote, the present editor of the Freethinker, the national organ of English secularism, is a bitter enemy of Socialism, and the late Colonel Bob Ingersoll, the chief apostle of freethought doctrines in the United States, was well known as an apostle of capitalism.

On the continent of Europe many other quite similar cases might be recorded, but those already quoted will suffice, as being those most easily verified by our readers. It is a suggestive and amusing fact that in the motley ranks of the defenders of capitalism the professional propagandists of freethought are comrades-in-arms of His Holiness the Pope; the ill-reasoned and inconclusive encyclicals lately issued against Socialism make the hierarchy of the Catholic Church belated camp-followers in the army marching under the banners raised by the agnostic exponents of the individualist philosophy. Obviously, even the meanest intelligence can see that there need

be no identity of thought between the freethinker, as such, and the Socialist, as a Socialist. From what then does the popular misconception arise? In the first instance, from the interested attempt of the propertied classes to create such a prejudice against Socialism as might deter the working class from giving ear to its doctrines—an attempt too often successful; and in the second instance, from a misconception of the attitude of the Socialist party toward theological dogma in general. The Socialist Republican party, of Ireland, prohibits the discussion of theological or anti-theological questions at its meetings, public or private. This is in conformity with the practice of the chief Socialist parties of the world, which have frequently—in Germany, for example, declared religion to be a private matter and outside the scope of Socialist action. Modern Socialism, in fact, as it exists in the minds of its leading exponents and as it is held and worked for by an increasing number of enthusiastic adherents throughout the civilized world, has an essentially material, matter-of-fact foundation. We do not mean that its supporters are necessarily materialists in the vulgar and merely anti-theological sense of the term, but that they do not base their Socialism upon any interpretation of the language or meaning of Scripture, nor upon

FREETHINKERS UNCOMPROMISING IN THEIR HATRED FOR THE WORKING CLASS CAUSE.

This is the main reason why Socialists fight shy of theological dogmas and religions generally—because we feel that Socialism is based upon a series of facts requiring only unassisted human reason to grasp and master in all their details, whereas religion of every kind is admittedly based upon "faith" in the occurrence in past ages of a series of phenomena inexplicable by any process of mere human reasoning. Obviously, therefore, to identify Socialism with religion would be to abandon at once that universal, non-sectarian character which to-day we find indispensable to working class unity, as it would mean that our members would be required to conform to our religious creed, as well as to one specific economic faith; a course of action we have no intention of entering upon, as it would inevitably entangle in the disputes of the warring sects of the world, and thus lead to the disintegration of the Socialist party.

BUSINESS DEPARTMENT NOTES

From the standpoint of the circulation department, all Socialists are divided into two categories—those who gather and send in subscriptions and those who do not. It is the aim of the circulation department to gradually abolish the second category and to transfer its members over to the first. The reader of the business department notes, before passing on to other matters in the paper, should ask himself two questions. The first: "What have I done during the past week to help in this work?" and the second: "What can I do along this line during the coming week?" If forced to answer his first question in a way rather reflecting on his activity, he should make amends by setting the task for the coming week a little higher—just to even things up.

LABOR NEWS COMPANY.

The old edition of the S. L. P. and the S. D. P. has been exhausted and we have just issued a new leaflet entitled: "What is the Difference?" which brings the corruption of the Social Democratic or "Socialist" party up to date, and also contains the complete record of Armory-Builder Carey. Sections shall be provided with a supply. \$1.25 thousand.

POLITICAL WANDERINGS

On August 3, 1895, the New Jersey State Committee of the People's party held a meeting in Camden and issued a call for the State convention to meet in Trenton on Labor Day of that year, to nominate a candidate for Governor. I was authorized to write the call and I took advantage of the opportunity to declare that one of the purposes of the convention would be the re-affirming of our devotion to the declared principles of the party.

When the committee presented its platform it was voted down and a milk and water one presented by Joseph R. Buchanan was adopted. Members of the committee characterized the action as cowardly and several delegates left the convention. Thus it was we reaffirmed our devotion to the Omaha platform. It was hard to get any one to stand as candidate for Governor. The first ten nominated declined, and men who were not present and who were not even known as Populists were mentioned. Finally W. B. Ellis, a workingman, of Trenton, accepted. Somebody nominated Buchanan and he got one vote.

As secretary of the convention I was instructed to telegraph a resolution to Eugene V. Debs who was then staying at the McHenry County Jail, Woodstock, Ill. Debs was "Our Gene" long before the Social Democrats were thought of. I was then in favor of Debs as the Populist candidate for President in 1896. The following was the resolution:

"The People's party of New Jersey in convention assembled at Trenton on Labor Day, sends greetings to Eugene V. Debs, champion of the oppressed and illustrious victim of the violation of the American citizens constitutional right to trial by jury."

In Which Woman Suffrage, "Our Gene", and the Demise of the Populist Party, Figure.

I advocated Debs for President, thinking that if sentiment favorable to him could be aroused it would serve to unite the party on a man and platform; which would bring before the voters the principles advocated by the Middle-of-the-Road wing of the party. I tried to get Buchanan to come out for Debs but he declined. He said it would be bad politics, that Debs was too radical. I argued that for that very reason I thought it would be good, practical, shrewd, or whatever else chose to call it, politics. That the issue was becoming more clearly between Capital and Labor, and it behooved Labor to put forward its ablest champion. Joe then told me that Debs was a dipsomaniac, and confided to me that the famous Debs "cucumber" incident was a fake. He proposed to love "Gene" like a brother, but because of Debs' misfortune dared not endanger the movement by advocating him for President. Debs had written a letter advocating Joe's election to Congress in 1892, and in 1894 came into the State and stumped for him. Debs was good enough for Joe when it served Joe's purpose.

The three workers sending in the largest number of subscriptions for the Weekly this week are: J. R. Strupel, St. Louis, Mo., 12; O. Haselgrove, Baltimore, Md., 7; Ben Hilbert Jr., Hamilton, O., 6.

We received a smaller number of Monthly subscriptions than Weeklies. They are as follows: J. A. Leach, Tucson, Ariz., 24; Peter Neilson, Woburn, Mass., 19; scattering, 69; total, 112.

There has been a large demand late for Bebel's "Woman". The English editions are virtually exhausted, and moreover, they are all translations of the first editions. The thirty-third edition of "Woman" has recently been published in German, and in it Bebel made many radical changes and important additions. Comrade DeLeon is engaged upon a translation of this edition and the publication of his translation will soon be begun in serial form in The Daily People. Later it will be brought out in book form in the Arm and Hammer Series. It will make a book of about 400 pages, and will sell in cloth for \$1 a volume.

Over 40,000 leaflets have been sold by the Labor News Company in the past week, showing increased activity of the comrades. Ten thousand of these were to Canada and most of the remainder to the far West.

Alliance Cigar Factory

— Eckstein Bros —
517 East Eighty-Eighth St
BEST CIGARS AT LOWEST PRICES:
Box of 50 S. T. & L. A. \$2.4
Medallion, 4 1/2 inches. \$1.2
Nature's Beauties, 4 1/2 inches. 2.0
Invincibles, 5 1/2 inches. 1.7
Arm and Hammer, 4 1/2 inches. 1.7
We Pay Express Charges. Price list sent on application.

