

"Progress and Poverty" and first published it has not forgotten her prophet. And we have ground to hope that the State of which she is the metropolis will be prepared to follow her lead next year. The action of the legislature inspires the friends of progress with new courage.

Locally the Single Taxers of Toronto have taken a step of importance in requesting the City Council that "when property is offered the Assessment Commissioner by private owners for the purpose of making public improvements the assessment be raised to the price asked from the city." This resolution was incited by the offer of a piece of property for a park for \$600,000, the assessment of which was \$300,000. The Toronto Single Taxers claim that this would save millions to the city.

In the Texas legislature, Senator Paulus has introduced a resolution to amend the Constitution providing that on all arable land not included within the limits of a homestead, held for speculative purposes and not in actual cultivation, a tax equal to the full annual rental value shall be levied. He has received 134 long petitions from various parts of the State urging that this measure be referred to the people. The *Galveston News*, says that this measure will not likely be passed since it is a long step toward the Single Tax, but it also says that "the speculative holding of lands in Texas is becoming more unpopular all the time." Single Taxers in Texas who read this are urged to give Senator Paulus what encouragement they can.

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## A WORD ON SOCIALISM.

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ADDRESSED TO SOCIALISTS AND TO THOSE WHO MAY BECOME SO.

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(Translated expressly for *The Single Tax Review* by L. H. Berens.)

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### INTRODUCTION.

That the industrial masses of the people are to-day plundered of their earnings and deprived of their rights is very obvious. The monstrous difference between poverty and wealth, between the comforts and luxuries at the disposal of the rich and the miserably hard lot of continuous toil for scanty reward, to which the industrial masses of the people are condemned, is sufficient proof. The ever growing discontent of the toiling masses has forced even the possessing classes to recognize that the present condition of things is unendurable and cannot be maintained, has compelled them to give up their former political belief that the State had no need to concern itself with the condition of its citizens, and to pass law after law to appease discontent and to adjust injustices. All these laws, however, are avowedly regarded by many as insufficient. They rightly believe that Society must be renewed from its very foundations. The



majority of those holding this view call themselves Socialists, or, at least, expect social salvation only from Socialism.

Among the industrial masses of the German-speaking people, Socialism has for a considerable time past aroused the most roseate hopes and inspiring expectations. Only the Swiss and the English-speaking people have been, and still are, doubtful of its promise. The enthusiasm it has aroused in the industrial population of the larger towns and industrial centers of Germany and Austria has resulted in Socialism winning one electoral victory after another. But despite these victories, despite the organization and discipline maintained amongst those who follow its flag, the roseate hopes it once aroused are commencing to pale, the inspiring expectations to pass away. Even amongst the ranks of the Socialist Party itself there is an increasing recognition that the realization of Socialism is not to be depended on. The greater the progress Socialism makes, the more appalling it finds the difficulties to be surmounted, and the realization of its programme is deferred to a more and more distant future. On the other hand Socialism has entirely lost its terror to the possessing classes. Their professors and publicists are increasingly concerning themselves with Socialism; it is increasingly the fashion to pay pretty compliments to the so-called Scientific Socialism, to praise its great effects, and ever increasingly the other established political parties are intriguing with Socialists, treating them not as belonging to a revolutionary or social reform movement, but as competing politicians with whom the spoils of office must necessarily be divided. But while Socialism is apparently winning all along the line, while learned professors are praising and wily politicians are manifesting their respect for it, the hopes it once aroused amongst the disinherited masses of the people are steadily dwindling, and the expectations of those who saw in it the promise of a speedy victory over social injustice, of the redemption of the masses from undeserved poverty and unmerited misery, are rapidly passing away.

Everywhere the feeling is spreading that Socialism promises many things it cannot secure, arouses expectations it cannot fulfil, and awakens many golden dreams and fond hopes it cannot realize. So feel even many of those who vote Socialist simply because they have lost faith in the other political parties. If it were a question of an immediate decision on the principles of Socialism, it is quite safe to prophesy that not a tenth of the Socialist electors in Germany or in Switzerland would vote in their favor.

When here, and in the following pages the term Socialism is used, it does not refer to the aspirations and efforts of the workers for a larger share of the fruits of their own labor, nor to the practical movements to which these aspirations and efforts give life and vigor, such as Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies. As the British and American workers have abundantly demonstrated, such movements can be established and successfully carried on without the aid or guidance of any Socialist theories.

What, then, is Socialism? The answer is not easy to give. For the term Socialism is so vague and vapory as almost to defy definition. To define is to describe, to attach a definite meaning, to set limits, and to fix boundaries.



But one can scarcely define or attach a definite meaning to a word which is used by almost every one of its exponents to denote something different, or set limits and fix the boundaries of anything that in all directions flows into the shoreless, boundless seas of the indefinite.

That which binds Socialists together is not a clear conception of what they want, but a vague feeling of animosity against the order of society as it exists, mainly against property, free competition and enterprise, to which with swift logic they attribute its ills, as well as against the power of the State which protects and maintains these arrangements.

The members of the Socialist Party may overwhelm one another with the most insulting abuse, may openly manifest their contempt one for the other, and yet remain together and work together. But they instinctively feel that those do not belong to their party who, with the best intentions in the world, or with the most just cause, venture to say a word in defense of the employers of labor, or who let fall a single sentence justifying the institution of property as applied to the products of human labor.

Anarchist theories may also be regarded as forming part and parcel of Socialism. Many Socialists will declare this to be absurd. Between Socialism and Anarchy there is, they will contend, as much difference as between fire and water. But the differences between Socialism and Anarchy have no real practical importance. And very many who belong to neither of these schools will have far more sympathy with Anarchy, with its open declaration of war against society as it exists, than with modern Socialism with its revolutionary war-cries and its weak and evasive politics.

Whenever then, in the following pages Socialism is referred to, the term will be used to include all theories directed against property, free competition and private enterprise. The subtle distinctions between the socialist systems of different schools are, in fact, more apparent than real; they all spring from the same stock and are all based upon the same instincts and tendencies, as will be shown later on. So, too, when Socialists are referred to, it will not be used to denote those who every five years or so vote for a Socialist candidate, nor even to those who habitually take and read Socialist newspapers, but to those who are imbued with Socialistic ideas and the Socialistic feeling.

According to the pretensions of its followers, Socialism has been called into existence to accomplish something very great and of fundamental importance. Obviously, however, the practical means it adopts are quite out of proportion to its avowed goal. "We shall procure for you a most unexpected happiness, a world of golden days! We shall bring you the greatest progress humanity has ever experienced" and so on, cry the Socialist leaders. "But how is such progress to be attained?" No answer, or a mere sound of empty words from which nothing definite can be gathered. "What have we to do to conquer for ourselves the high happiness Socialism promises?" A long pause. "This we cannot tell you," at length comes the answer, "this depends upon our opponents, upon the development of the capitalistic system. In the meanwhile you must prepare for your emancipation. To this end subscribe at once to Socialist



papers. On the first of May parade the streets with a little bit of red ribbon in your button-hole. Join our electoral clubs and ward committees. Above everything else vote for us and for those whom we select as candidates. Do not allow yourselves to believe for a moment that our candidates are anything but perfect. Even should you not like him yourself, you must vote for him for the sake of the party; a socialist sparrow is always worth more than a bourgeois pigeon. If only you will vote Socialist whenever called upon, soon everything will be right."

We, however, cannot believe that the salvation of humanity is to be had quite so cheaply. And our doubts are only strengthened when the gospel of salvation is forced upon us so heatedly.

To save humanity, to up-lift mankind to a higher place of individual and social life, this has hitherto been regarded as a noble and difficult task, at which few have worked with success who have been so lavish of high-sounding promises. And it is difficult to believe that just those are called to the emancipation and uplifting of their fellows who are continually squabbling amongst themselves, who on slight provocation, on the expression of the smallest difference of opinion, overwhelm one another with bitter sneers and vulgar abuse. An eternal degrading strife, during which the dirtiest suspicions and most biting epithets are hurled to and fro—such is the unsavory story of every Socialist party. Through the mouth overflows that with which the heart is full! Can such folk be specially called upon to usher in the reign of Justice and of Love?

Some few Socialists and friends of Socialism freely admit all this, and attempt to excuse it on the grounds that Socialism is a new movement, which contains within itself the seed of a new and better order of things, which cannot be called into being without fermentation, but that in time Socialism will be clarified and purified.

This sounds all right, but has the disadvantage of being contradicted by the facts. The facts prove at least that the fermentation of Socialism has lasted unduly long; and that of its clarification and purification nothing is yet to be noticed. For nearly a hundred years a veritable mountain of books have been written upon Socialism, yet the same lack of clearness and definiteness pervades the movement as in its earliest beginnings, and yet nobody seems to know clearly what Socialism really is or how it is ever going to be realized. Nay, more, in the writings of the earlier Socialists we find a more clear and practical grip and presentation of realities than are to be found in the avowedly scientific works of the Socialist writers of to-day. The confusion has only grown with the literature on the subject. What was formerly announced by one school of Socialist theorists as the indisputable results of scientific inquiry, is to-day questioned on all points by the followers of other schools of Socialism. Small wonder that throughout the Socialist Party a paralysing uncertainty is spreading, making energetic action impossible, and arousing grave doubts whether, in truth, anything of real radical importance is within its power. Where Science itself moves only toward greater confusion and uncertainty, how can practice based upon it be more successful?



To err is human. But one cannot err as Socialist doctrinaires have done without forfeiting all claims to be believed. Time after time, without exception, they have had the misfortune to give the most perverse advice, ignoring everything good, useful and needful, often indeed contemptuously condemning them, proposing in their place steps of which they have prophesied great things, but which have all too soon proved themselves but the fault of a crude, immature and unpractical imagination. The few practical results the labor movement led by Socialists can to-day point to, have been borrowed from those they with pompous superiority are in the habit of referring to as "narrow-minded bourgeois." In Great Britain, Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies had attained a high degree of practical usefulness at a time when learned German Socialists imagined themselves much too superior to concern themselves with any such paltry movements. For many decades Social Democracy has followed the will-o'-the-wisp of the nationalization of the means of production, only to find out to-day, after a few practical experiences, that such steps help the workers nothing, but, contrary to their anticipations, simply help to reduce the risks and to swell the profits of capitalistic employers. Where, as in Switzerland, such nationalization has already proved itself an excellent means of filling the money-bags of the employer, the local Socialists boldly ignore any such aim as forming part and parcel of their proposals. With blind zeal Socialists continue to advocate all manner of unpractical and useless, specious and pseudo reforms, whilst any understanding of more practical and intelligent reforms, such as the Insurance of the Working Classes, Co-operative Societies, and so on, have had to be forced upon them by their establishment and development by men outside their ranks, whose labors they have not hesitated openly to scoff at, despise and abuse. Anything and everything proposed by others, by men outside their own ranks, Socialists have always slightly decried without careful examination or serious consideration, while loudly proclaiming the superiority of their own futile nostrums and theories. And yet the history of Socialist theories is one long endless chain of errors and false conclusions; the story of their vain attempts to put them into practice, one long recital of crude blunders and destroyed illusions. The plans of Fourier and of Lasalle have come to nothing; the prophesies of Bebel have never been fulfilled. Every attempt to carry out the theories of Socialism has either gone altogether wrong, or has resulted in sectarian creations which convey no lesson and have no meaning for the rest of mankind. So many disastrous experiments, so much waste of money and of self-sacrificing devotion; such are the fruits of Socialist Theories. So much chaff and so little corn, so much noise with so little result, so much ado about nothing, is not to be found in the history of any other movement.

At the time of the International, the far-famed union of the fathers of the Socialism and Anarchy of to-day, the first item in their programme was the sweeping away of national boundaries—of course, at one fell sweep. As one member of this ingenious society tells us, a heated discussion took place as to how this proposal was to be formulated. The public were to be left without



any doubt but that Socialists would abolish not only any and every existing State, but any other that might arise to hinder the realization of their ideals. The International, of which even to-day many Socialists speak with awe and reverence, wanted to be or to be considered, a most important creation for the salvation of mankind; but like every other Socialist creation, it disappeared after a very short existence, marked by ugly quarrels and mutual recriminations.

Some of the more frank amongst Socialists freely admit that Socialist doctrinaires have often gone astray, but argue that Socialism itself is right. The whole of modern development makes for Socialism, they contend. The growth of Trade Unions, of Co-operative Societies, the nationalization in Germany and other countries of the means of communication, the municipalization of many public services, the extension and multiplication of laws for the protection of the workers, and so on; all these things, they hold, but level and prepare the way for the coming of Socialism. In this way in a few centuries or so the Socialist State will become a reality—if things do not meanwhile take another turn, as is expected. Such theories certainly hold out to the proletariat, who have based their hopes upon Socialism, the prospect of a fairly long hunger cure. Such a consideration, however, does not appear to trouble the learned Socialist theorists. They simply say that we must necessarily await the evolution of the capitalistic system.

Naturally enough, capitalists are pleased to agree with this view. They, at least, have no objection to awaiting the evolution of the capitalistic system. But is it anything but bitter mockery to tell the workers that they must necessarily do so? Is it anything but an unworthy two-faced trick when leaders of Socialism hold forth so eloquently about their high aims and ideals, whilst in their heart of hearts they secretly believe that of these aims and ideals not much can be attained during their life-time? Is it any wonder that the rich should have entirely lost their fear of Socialists, and have come to regard them as men from whom, not deeds, but words alone are to be expected?

The soothing theory that evolution necessarily works for Socialism is obviously the result of sheer embarrassment, because all other theories have been ship-wrecked, lost and swept aside by facts. Either Socialism is good, in which case we should at least attempt to establish it at once; or it is useless for our present needs, and then it is likely to be equally useless in the future. In any case the masses of mankind take no great interest in things that may or may not happen in some remote future. Bread buttered only with the butter of the future tastes no better than dry bread.

Our generation is not the only one that has had the same experience of Socialism and Socialists. Time and again in previous centuries Socialist theorists have come forward to cure the world of all ills. Always with the same air of infallibility; always laboriously setting aside the sober reason of man to substitute some assumed revelation of higher wisdom, formerly religious, to-day scientific; always with the same concern, not only to remove injustice and to redress wrongs, but to put the lowest in the place of the highest, and so at