

A WORD ON SOCIALISM.

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.*)

V.

SOCIALIST POLITICS.

In Socialist newspapers we constantly find and at Socialist gatherings we constantly hear some such talk as the following: "The bourgeois, the possessing classes, are corrupt to the core. They are nothing but plunderers, exploiters of honest labor. All they do is to put in their own pockets the dividends extorted by the sweating of the workers. They are nothing better than robbers and thieves." But when Socialists are returned to Parliament, and find themselves face to face with those they have not scrupled to libel and insult so freely, they make no proposal that what they vaguely term "Capitalism" shall be abolished, nor that the millionaires shall be dispossessed and their millions given to the poor. They content themselves with begging for all sorts of petty philanthropy, or for some modest law for the protection of the workers, which at most inconveniences some of the smallest manufacturers. When they are appointed to watch over the administration of Justice, as has often happened in Switzerland, they do not run after the millionaires to lock them up, to take them to prison or to houses of correction. Not a bit of it. Like their bourgeois colleagues they only lock up poor criminals, who, according to the assurances of their own newspapers, are nothing but the helpless victims of the capitalistic system of production.

"Those who promise too much, perform but little; those who grasp at too much, hold nothing fast," says the proverb. So it is with Socialists. They are lavish with their promises, but niggardly with their fulfilment. They demand everything, and therefore receive nothing worth the having.

Look round the world at the works of Socialists. Germany is known as the chief centre of the Socialist movement. Over fifty years ago the founders of Socialism were under the impression that their dominion over Germany was near at hand. Again and again they prophesied that the established order was near its end—some even venturing to foretell the date of its final overthrow. But what has Socialism hitherto accomplished? The solution of the Social Problem? The emancipation of the poor from their dependent position and helpless miseries? The sweeping away of social wrongs and injustice? Not even the slightest move in any such direction. Whoever will honestly examine the facts will have to admit that Socialism *per se* has done practically nothing for the welfare of the people. At least it has accom-

plished nothing that would not have been done as well or even better had the Socialist programme never been formulated.

In both Great Britain and Germany the industrial masses of the people are still groaning under the oppression which unrestricted private property in land imposes upon the disinherited. Apart, however, from this common evil, what an incomparably better picture is presented by Great Britain, which is still practically uninfluenced by Social Democracy, than is offered by Germany, permeated though it is by its noisy and obtrusive agitation. In Great Britain free trade; in Germany a usurious Custom's Tariff. In Great Britain the fullest freedom for the co-operative and trade-union movement; in Germany all sorts of pettifogging restrictions and official interferences. In Great Britain taxes mainly falling upon the rich; in Germany taxes mainly falling upon the poor. In Great Britain self-government based upon a democratic franchise; in Germany a burdensome guardianship, based upon a franchise which gives dominion to the rich and powerful privileged classes. In Great Britain the inappreciable blessing of the greatest possible personal freedom; in Germany a ubiquitous officialdom, the degrading arbitrariness and demoralizing superintendence of the police watching our every movement. Small wonder that German workers who emigrate to Great Britain and America after a short sojourn generally throw their socialistic ideas into the rubbish heap. ❧

The one thing of real value to the workers in which Germany is still ahead of Great Britain is not due to Social Democracy, but to its greatest opponent. With characteristic insight Bismark recognised that by the Insurance of the Workers the State could offer the industrial masses of the people something more than a mere sham reform. However deficient the scheme adopted may be, that it exists at all is due to the man for whose fall from power the pigmies of Social Democracy with laughable conceit claim the credit. But pray tell us what have you achieved worthy of being compared with this one act of Bismark? Where can we find a single law, a single act of importance, inspired by the spirit of Socialism? The best and most useful of your leaders practically exhausted himself in combating the notorious ill-treatment of soldiers. This does credit to his good heart. But do you as a Party really dream of laying the foundations of the ideal State of the future by fighting against the present ill-treatment of soldiers?

Those who with the best will in the world are most anxious to recognise the services of German Social Democrats, will have the greatest difficulty in discovering any. From its first beginnings German Social Democracy has specially distinguished itself by preaching in theory the wildest revolt against existing conditions, while in practice it has cautiously left everything just as it was, by developing where it was not dangerous the most turbulent radicalism, while keeping as still as cowed mice in times of stress. At their recent re-union at Nuremburg the great question was discussed whether the representatives of Socialism in Parliament should or should not vote for the Budget. To decline to do so would be to testify to a revolutionary class con-

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sciousness; to do so would be to consent to a "rotten reform." The affair was all the more important since their abstinence or their consent practically made no difference. A three day's battle of words, a heated debate, long and eloquent speeches from every leader and would-be leader. Finally, that the Socialist Party in Parliament should not consent to this "rotten reform," it was agreed to by a great majority of these class-conscious heroes and apostles of the Socialist State of the future. The minority, however, declared that they would not be converted to this view. Thereupon the Chairman admonished the assembled comrades—who had been accusing one another of being infamous double-tongued liars, devoid of conscience—of the necessity for unanimity, for the Party wants unanimity more than its daily bread, and begs them not to offend against the tone of brotherhood which should prevail at all their gatherings. The following day they were called together to discuss the attitude of the Party on the question of imposing 500 millions of marks of other taxes. Empty benches, bored faces, phrases after phrases without a single new idea, no discussion, since on such practical questions those anointed with the sacred oil of Scientific Socialism have nothing to say. Following on this refreshing unanimity, a long-winded Resolution, full of pious wishes, was unanimously agreed to. Thereupon the gathering breaks up with a feeling of deep satisfaction that it had got rid of a thing the consideration of which demands some knowledge and thought. The Chairman—who by the way had availed himself with great financial success of the capitalistic system of production—demands the closing words, once more to incite the comrades to continuous combat against "Capitalism." Was he making fun of the delegates?

(To be continued.)

PROFESSIONAL ECONOMISTS VERSUS SINGLE TAXERS.

(For the Review.)

By J. A. DEMUTH.

To Alvin Saunders Johnson, Professor of Economics at Cornell University, writing in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January, under the caption "The Case Against the Single Tax," may be imputed the assumption of having won his case without having fired a single argumentative shot. This he presumes to have accomplished, in the very start, by a pose-suggesting implication.

After calling attention to the pronounced heterodoxy of the professional economists of the present time—instancing the economist as protectionist, as advocate of fiat money, as approver of private monopoly, as having socialistic leanings, and even as coquetting with philosophic anarchism, he affirms that "It would not be difficult, today, to find an economist who would joyfully serve as apologist for the Industrial Workers of the World." "In short," he