

## AFFIRMATIVE REFUTATION

THE CHAIRMAN : Mr. Nearing, now having recovered his second wind, will speak twenty minutes. (Applause.)

MR. NEARING : Mr. Russell started out with the promise of cheering you up. When he left you, he had you hunting mountain lions with bows and arrows. (Laughter.)

Like a good philosopher, Mr. Russell divides life into categories. I never mentioned Karl Marx, but what I said he labelled Marxian, and then he proceeded to hammer Karl Marx. Well, now, I have no objection to having what I said called Marxian. But I didn't say it because Marx said it. I said it because I believe it was true. When I asserted that the form of Government corresponds with the stage of social revolution, I proved it not by quoting Marx, but by quoting history. And if Mr. Russell wants to disprove it, he must disprove it not by quoting Marx nor arguing with Marx, but by arguing with my history.

Mr. Russell should distinguish between two very important elements in the Bol-

shevik situation. When I described them I described them in two categories. I described the aspects of power under the communist party, the dictatorship, and I also described the economic forms which the Soviet Government was realizing, namely, economic constituencies, the scientific organization of economic life and the demand that everyone should be rewarded in proportion to his service, not in proportion to his property.

The parallel between Cromwell and Russia holds as to the dictatorship. So does the parallel between Russia and Italy hold as to the dictatorship. You can take the Fascist movement in Italy and parallel it step by step with the Cromwellian or the Russian dictatorship. But neither Cromwell nor Mussolini has proposed any form of economic reorganization. (Applause.)

Now, says Mr. Russell, because Russia is still agricultural and the West is industrial, we can expect the forms to be different. I think so. The Russian leaders got their training in Germany and England and the United States and Switzerland and France, which are all industrial. And then they went back and tried to apply their theories of communism to an agricultural country, and they didn't fit exactly, therefore,

the necessity of the new economic policy. When those same policies are applied to an industrial country they will not fit without the new economic policy. (Applause.)

But that is not the difference between Mr. Russell and me. He says when you have a population able to read and write you cannot proceed in the Bolshevik way, you must find another way. I will drag into the debate, with apologies, a quotation from an article which Mr. Russell wrote in the *New Republic* on November 17, 1920:

"While admitting the necessity and even utility of Bolshevism in Russia, I do not wish to see it spread or even to encourage the adoption of its philosophy by advanced parties in the Western world."

And in another article in the same periodical on the 3rd of November:

"I am compelled to reject Bolshevism for two reasons: First, because the price mankind must pay to achieve communism by Bolshevik methods is too terrible and, second, because even after paying the price I am not sure that they will have what they went after."

Mr. Russell doesn't like Bolshevism; neither do I. Mr. Russell doesn't like war; neither do I. Mr. Russell doesn't like

dictatorship; neither do I. If Mr. Russell was going on a picnic on Decoration Day he wouldn't like a rain; neither would I—and yet it might rain. (Laughter and applause.)

Now this is the question that I want to ask Mr. Russell: When the crisis does come, which you admit, and which I believe will come, when the crisis does come, and when the British capitalist system breaks down, for example, what will be the form of the transition society? I don't insist that Mr. Russell produce a form, but I ask that he suggest a form.

And I'd like in that connection to call your attention to a remark of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald—Mr. MacDonald, whose present job is to prove that there is another form, and who hasn't yet proved it. Mr. MacDonald wrote a book in 1920 called, *Parliament or Revolution*. And in that book he says:

“So far as this country is concerned we have reached a stage when the socialist process, when the socialist programme is a matter of political fighting. A parliamentary election will give us all the power that Lenin had to get by a revolution.”

Now, note: “Of course,” says Mr. MacDonald in the same paragraph, “if it

came to be that we had a bankrupt country, a demoralized and disorganized people, and anarchy from one end of a ruined country to another, a committee of public safety might well step into Whitehall and make up its mind to impose a new order upon an old chaos." (Applause.)

Now that is exactly what happened in Russia in 1917, and that is exactly what happened when Cromwell took the reins of power in England in the seventeenth century. In other words, when one social system breaks down and another one has to be rebuilt, there is a transition stage during which a committee of public safety steps in and takes control and imposes a new order upon an old chaos. And that is what happened in Russia, in the first instance, and that is what will happen in England after Mr. MacDonald gets through with his present experiment. (Applause.)

Now I am not arguing, as Mr. Russell seemed to imagine, that we can meet the aristocracy of the United States to-day, known as the Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce. (Laughter.) I realize quite well that the American plutocracy not only has its fingers on American economic life, but that they have the political and the propaganda machinery of the country wholly

within their grasp. My argument did not concern that stage in social evolution. I argued that the present system would break down, and that when it did break down—that is, when the ruling class can no longer deliver the goods—then the change that I have suggested must come, not by Act of Parliament, but by the appointment of a committee of public safety.

Now that is the issue between Mr. Russell and me. It is up to Mr. Russell to show that when a breakdown does come there is another way out. I wish there was another way out. I wish that Mr. MacDonald's way was the way. I wish that people were intelligent enough in America to make economic and social changes by Act of Parliament. But I also wish that we wouldn't pass espionage Acts and lynch negroes in America—and yet they do it. (Applause.) You can wish all you like, you have got to face the realities of life as we have them.

Now, says Mr. Russell, the alternative is bows and arrows and barbarism. It is—provided that there is nothing to replace this miserable economic fiasco called capitalism when it breaks down. And if Mr. Russell's counsel prevails when the capitalist system breaks down, you will get

a stick and a knife and make yourself a bow and an arrow.

That isn't my idea of the way to handle that particular job. I believe that right now, before the capitalist system breaks down, when certain of us can see the breakdown coming, it is up to us, first, to say so, and then to gather together as many other people as can see it, and then to get together and work out a practical working programme to meet the breakdown and to put something else in the place of the old chaos, namely, a new order.

Mr. Russell has no objection to find with the communist philosophy. He has no objection to find with the socialist state. He only says it can't be done. Well, my answer to that is this: That nothing has ever been done till it was tried. (Applause.) And everything that has ever been done has been tried many times before it was done right. And if the Russians haven't found the right way, it is up to Mr. Russell and me to help Americans find the right way. (Applause.) All of this talk about bows and arrows and barbarism is merely a waste of valuable time. What we want is a practical statesmanlike way out of that tremendous difficulty.

Let me sum the thing up in this fashion :

We agree substantially as to the form of the Soviet Government. Will it fit the Western world? Well, first, will capitalist society break down in the Western world under the earthquake shocks of war and class strife and economic hard times? Mr. Russell thinks so, and so do I. That is our first point together. We believe that the capitalist system will fail. We believe it is failing now.

Second, what will take the place of the capitalist state, of the capitalist order. We both believe that it should be—and I believe that it will be—a socialist or producers state. And we go along somewhat together on that point.

Third, when the breakdown comes, will a highly centralized committee of action be necessary? I believe it will. Must it be under the direction of producers rather than of property owners? I believe it must. Must it be dominated by a highly organized and sternly disciplined party? I believe it must. Must it aim at economic emancipation? I think it must. And I think that it will have to do that by socializing the social machinery of production, resources, utilities, industries, merchandising and the like, by socializing and organizing industry, by establishing self-governing units orga-



nized on a basis of occupational representation, and that the first law must be: "He that will not help produce, neither shall he share in the products of industry." (Applause.)

Those are the transition steps, those are the economic forms which Soviet Russia is now trying to take. And I believe that those are the transition steps and those the economic forms which England and Germany and France and the United States will be compelled to take when the time comes.

In other words, all of these questions that I have just presented to you I answer in the affirmative. Mr. Russell answers some of them in the negative. Now I revert to my question. When the crisis does come—not whether we can fit the aristocracy now, not what Karl Marx said, not human frailty and incapacity—when the crisis does come to the hundred and ten millions in America and to the forty-five millions in Britain and the sixty-five millions in Germany and the thirty-five millions in France, when the crisis does come, what will be the form of the transition society, if it isn't the Soviet form? (Applause.)