

In Defense of Marxism: "If America Should Go Communist" and "Workshop Talks"

These two short pieces by Leon Trotsky and James Connolly provide answers to some of the most common misconceptions about socialism: Do socialists want to create a society in the image of the Stalinist USSR? What will the future society look like? Isn't capitalism the only possible system? Is socialism against religion? These questions and more are answered in these light-hearted, but penetrating essays - a must read for all socialists! - The Editor

If America Should Go Communist

By Leon Trotsky

Should America go communist as a result of the difficulties and problems that your capitalist social order is unable to solve, it will discover that communism, far from being an intolerable bureaucratic tyranny and individual regimentation, will be the means of greater individual liberty and shared abundance.

At present most Americans regard communism solely in the light of the experience of the Soviet Union. They fear lest Sovietism in America would produce the same material result as it has brought for the culturally backward peoples of the Soviet Union.

They fear lest communism should try to fit them to a bed of Procrustes, and they point to the bulwark of Anglo-Saxon conservatism as an insuperable obstacle even to possibly desirable reforms. They argue that Great Britain and Japan would undertake military intervention against the American soviets. They shudder lest Americans be regimented in their habits of dress and diet, be compelled to subsist on famine rations, be forced to read stereotyped official propaganda in the newspapers, be coerced to serve as rubber stamps for decisions arrived at without their active participation or be required to keep their thoughts to themselves and loudly praise their soviet leaders in public, through fear of

imprisonment and exile.

They fear monetary inflation, bureaucratic tyranny and intolerable red tape in obtaining the necessities of life. They fear soulless standardization in the arts and sciences, as well as in the daily necessities of life. They fear that all political spontaneity and the presumed freedom of the press will be destroyed by the dictatorship of a monstrous bureaucracy. And they shudder at the thought of being forced into an uncomprehended glibness in Marxist dialectic and disciplined social philosophies. They fear, in a word, that Soviet America will become the counterpart of what they have been told Soviet Russia looks like.

Actually American soviets will be as different from the Russian soviets as the United States of President Roosevelt differs from the Russian Empire of Czar Nicholas II. Yet communism can come in America only through revolution, just as independence and democracy came in America. The American temperament is energetic and violent, and it will insist on breaking a good many dishes and upsetting a good many apple carts before communism is firmly established. Americans are enthusiasts and sportsmen before they are specialists and statesmen, and it would be contrary to the American tradition to make a major change without choosing sides and cracking heads.

However, the American communist revolution will be insignificant compared to the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, in terms of your national wealth and population, no matter how great its comparative cost. That is because civil war of a revolutionary nature isn't fought by the handful of men at the top -- the 5 or 10 percent who own nine-tenths of American wealth; this handful could recruit its counterrevolutionary armies only from among the lower middle classes. Even so, the revolution could easily attract them to its banner by showing that support of the soviets alone offers them the prospect of salvation.

Everybody below this group is already economically prepared for communism. The depression has ravaged your working class and has dealt a crushing blow to the farmers, who had already been

injured by the long agricultural decline of the postwar decade. There is no reason why these groups should counterpose determined resistance to the revolution; they have nothing to lose, providing, of course, that the revolutionary leaders adopt a farsighted and moderate policy toward them.

Who else will fight against communism? Your corporal's guard of billionaires and multimillionaires? Your Mellons, Morgans, Fords and Rockefellers? They will cease struggling as soon as they fail to find other people to fight for them.

The American soviet government will take firm possession of the commanding heights of your business system: the banks, the key industries and the transportation and communication systems. It will then give the farmers, the small tradespeople and businessmen a good long time to think things over and see how well the nationalized section of industry is working.

Here is where the American soviets can produce real miracles. "Technocracy" can come true only under communism, when the dead hands of private property rights and private profits are lifted from your industrial system. The most daring proposals of the Hoover commission on standardization and rationalization will seem childish compared to the new possibilities let loose by American communism.

National industry will be organized along the line of the conveyor belt in your modern continuous-production automotive factories. Scientific planning can be lifted out of the individual factory and applied to your entire economic system. The results will be stupendous.

Costs of production will be cut to 20 percent, or less, of their present figure. This, in turn, would rapidly increase your farmers' purchasing power.

To be sure, the American soviets would establish their own gigantic farm enterprises, as schools of voluntary collectivization. Your farmers could easily calculate whether it was to their individual advantage to remain as isolated links or to join the public chain.

The same method would be used to draw small businesses and industries into the

national organization of industry. By soviet control of raw materials, credits and quotas of orders, these secondary industries could be kept solvent until they were gradually and without compulsion sucked into the socialized business system.

Without compulsion! The American soviets would not need to resort to the drastic measures that circumstances have often imposed upon the Russians. In the United States, through the science of publicity and advertising, you have means for winning the support of your middle class that were beyond the reach of the soviets of backward Russia with its vast majority of pauperized and illiterate peasants. This, in addition to your technical equipment and your wealth, is the greatest asset of your coming communist revolution. Your revolution will be smoother in character than ours; you will not waste your energies and resources in costly social conflicts after the main issues have been decided; and you will move ahead so much more rapidly in consequence.

Even the intensity and devotion of religious sentiment in America will not prove an obstacle to the revolution. If one assumes the perspective of soviets in America, none of the psychological brakes will prove firm enough to retard the pressure of the social crisis. This has been demonstrated more than once in history. Besides, it should not be forgotten that the Gospels themselves contain some pretty explosive aphorisms.

As to the comparatively few opponents of the soviet revolution, one can trust to American inventive genius. It may well be that you will take your unconvinced millionaires and send them to some picturesque island, rent-free for life, where they can do as they please.

You can do this safely, for you will not need to fear foreign interventions. Japan, Great Britain and the other capitalistic countries that intervened in Russia couldn't do anything but take American communism lying down. As a matter of fact, the victory of communism in America -- the stronghold of capitalism -- will cause communism to spread to other countries. Japan will probably have joined the communistic ranks even before the establishment of the American soviets. The same is true of Great Britain.

In any case, it would be a crazy idea to send His Britannic Majesty's fleet against Soviet America, even as a raid against the southern and more conservative half of your continent. It would be hopeless and would never get any farther than a second-rate military escapade.

Within a few weeks or months of the establishment of the American soviets, Pan-Americanism would be a political reality.

The governments of Central and South America would be pulled into your federation like iron filings to a magnet. So would Canada. The popular movements in these countries would be so strong that they would force this great unifying process within a short period and at insignificant costs. I am ready to bet that the first anniversary of the American soviets would find the Western Hemisphere transformed into the Soviet United States of North, Central and South America, with its capital at Panama. Thus for the first time the Monroe Doctrine would have a complete and positive meaning in world affairs, although not the one foreseen by its author.

In spite of the complaints of some of your arch-conservatives, Roosevelt is not preparing for a soviet transformation of the United States.

The NRA aims not to destroy but to strengthen the foundations of American capitalism by overcoming your business difficulties. Not the Blue Eagle but the difficulties that the Blue Eagle is powerless to overcome will bring about communism in America. The "radical" professors of your Brain Trust are not revolutionists: they are only frightened conservatives. Your president abhors "systems" and "generalities." But a soviet government is the greatest of all possible systems, a gigantic generality in action.

The average man doesn't like systems or generalities either. It is the task of your communist statesmen to make the system deliver the concrete goods that the average man desires: his food, cigars, amusements, his freedom to choose his own neckties, his own house and his own automobile. It will be easy to give him these comforts in Soviet America.

Most Americans have been misled by the fact that in the USSR we had to build whole new basic industries from the ground up. Such a thing could not happen in America, where you are already compelled to cut down on your farm area and to reduce your industrial production. As a matter of fact, your tremendous technological equipment has been paralyzed by the crisis and already clamors to be put to use. You will be able to make a rapid step-up of consumption by your people the starting point of your economic revival.

You are prepared to do this as is no other country. Nowhere else has the study of

the internal market reached such intensity as in the United States. It has been done by your banks, trusts, individual businessmen, merchants, traveling salesmen and farmers as part of their stock-in-trade. Your soviet government will simply abolish all trade secrets, will combine all the findings of these researches for individual profit and will transform them into a scientific system of economic planning. In this your government will be helped by the existence of a large class of cultured and critical consumers. By combining the nationalized key industries, your private businesses and democratic consumer cooperation, you will quickly develop a highly flexible system for serving the needs of your population.

This system will be made to work not by bureaucracy and not by policemen but by cold, hard cash.

Your almighty dollar will play a principal part in making your new soviet system work. It is a great mistake to try to mix a "planned economy" with a "managed currency." Your money must act as regulator with which to measure the success or failure of your planning.

Your "radical" professors are dead wrong in their devotion to "managed money." It is an academic idea that could easily wreck your entire system of distribution and production. That is the great lesson to be derived from the Soviet Union, where bitter necessity has been converted into official virtue in the monetary realm.

There the lack of a stable gold ruble is one of the main causes of our many economic troubles and catastrophes. It is impossible to regulate wages, prices and quality of goods without a firm monetary system. An unstable ruble in a Soviet system is like having variable molds in a conveyor-belt factory. It won't work.

Only when socialism succeeds in substituting administrative control for money will it be possible to abandon a stable gold currency. Then money will become ordinary paper slips, like trolley or theater tickets. As socialism advances, these slips will also disappear, and control over individual consumption -- whether by money or administration -- will no longer be necessary when there is more than enough of everything for everybody!

Such a time has not yet come, though America will certainly reach it before any other country. Until then, the only way to reach such a state of development is to retain an effective regulator and measure for the working of your system. As a matter of fact, during the first few years a planned economy

needs sound money even more than did old-fashioned capitalism. The professor who regulates the monetary unit with the aim of regulating the whole business system is like the man who tried to lift both his feet off the ground at the same time.

Soviet America will possess supplies of gold big enough to stabilize the dollar -- a priceless asset. In Russia we have been expanding our industrial plant by 20 and 30 percent a year; but -- owing to a weak ruble -- we have not been able to distribute this increase effectively. This is partly because we have allowed our bureaucracy to subject our monetary system to administrative one-sidedness. You will be spared this evil. As a result you will greatly surpass us in both increased production and distribution, leading to a rapid advance in the comfort and welfare of your population.

In all this, you will not need to imitate our standardized production for our pitiable mass consumers. We have taken over from czarist Russia a pauper's heritage, a culturally undeveloped peasantry with a low standard of living. We had to build our factories and dams at the expense of our consumers. We have had continual monetary inflation and a monstrous bureaucracy.

Soviet America will not have to imitate our bureaucratic methods. Among us the lack of the bare necessities has caused an intense scramble for an extra loaf of bread, an extra yard of cloth by everyone. In this struggle our bureaucracy steps forward as a conciliator, as an all-powerful court of arbitration. You, on the other hand, are much wealthier and would have little difficulty in supplying all of your people with all of the necessities of life. Moreover, your needs, tastes and habits would never permit your bureaucracy to divide the national income. Instead, when you organize your society to produce for human needs rather than private profits, your entire population will group itself around new trends and groups, which will struggle with one another and prevent an overweening bureaucracy from imposing itself upon them.

You can thus avoid growth of bureaucratism by the practice of soviets, that is to say, democracy -- the most flexible form of government yet developed. Soviet organization cannot achieve miracles but must simply reflect the will of the people. With us the soviets have been bureaucratized as a result of the political monopoly of a single party, which has itself become a bureaucracy. This situation resulted from the exceptional difficulties of socialist pioneering in a poor and backward country.

The American soviets will be full-blooded and vigorous, without need or opportunity for such measures as circumstances imposed upon Russia. Your unregenerate capitalists will, of course, find no place for themselves in the new setup. It is hard to imagine Henry Ford as the head of the Detroit Soviet.

Yet a wide struggle between interests, groups and ideas is not only conceivable -- it is inevitable. One-year, five-year, ten-year plans of business development; schemes for national education; construction of new basic lines of transportation; the transformation of the farms; the program for improving the technological and cultural equipment of Latin America; a program for stratosphere communication; eugenics -- all of these will arouse controversy, vigorous electoral struggle and passionate debate in the newspapers and at public meetings.

For Soviet America will not imitate the monopoly of the press by the heads of Soviet Russia's bureaucracy. While Soviet America would nationalize all printing plants, paper mills and means of distribution, this would be a purely negative measure. It would simply mean that private capital will no longer be allowed to decide what publications should be established, whether they should be progressive or reactionary, "wet" or "dry," puritanical or pornographic. Soviet America will have to find a new solution for the question of how the power of the press is to function in a socialist regime. It might be done on the basis of proportional representation for the votes in each soviet election.

Thus the right of each group of citizens to use the power of the press would depend on their numerical strength -- the same principle being applied to the use of meeting halls, allotment of time on the air and so forth.

Thus the management and policy of publications would be decided not by individual checkbooks but by group ideas. This may take little account of numerically small but important groups, but it simply means that each new idea will be compelled, as throughout history, to prove its right to existence.

Rich Soviet America can set aside vast funds for research and invention, discoveries and experiments in every field. You won't neglect your bold architects and sculptors, your unconventional poets and audacious philosophers.

In fact, the Soviet Yankees of the future will give a lead to Europe in those very fields where Europe has hitherto

been your master. Europeans have little conception of the power of technology to influence human destiny and have adopted an attitude of sneering superiority toward "Americanism," particularly since the crisis. Yet Americanism marks the true dividing line between the Middle Ages and the modern world.

Hitherto America's conquest of nature has been so violent and passionate that you have had no time to modernize your philosophies or to develop your own artistic forms. Hence you have been hostile to the doctrines of Hegel, Marx and Darwin. The burning of Darwin's works by the Baptists of Tennessee is only a clumsy reflection of the American dislike for the doctrines of evolution. This attitude is not confined to your pulpits. It is still part of your general mental makeup.

Your atheists as well as your Quakers are determined rationalists. And your rationalism itself is weakened by empiricism and moralism. It has none of the merciless vitality of the great European rationalists. So your philosophic method is even more antiquated than your economic system and your political institutions.

Today, quite unprepared, you are being forced to face those social contradictions that grow up unsuspected in every society. You have conquered nature by means of the tools that your inventive genius has created, only to find that your tools have all but destroyed you. Contrary to all your hopes and desires, your unheard-of wealth has produced unheard-of misfortunes. You have discovered that social development does not follow a simple formula. Hence you have been thrust into the school of the dialectic -- to stay.

There is no turning back from it to the mode of thinking and acting prevalent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

While the romantic numskulls of Nazi Germany are dreaming of restoring the old race of Europe's Dark Forest to its original purity, or rather its original filth, you Americans, after taking a firm grip on your economic machinery and your culture, will apply genuine scientific methods to the problem of eugenics. Within a century, out of your melting pot of races there will come a new breed of men -- the first worthy of the name of Man.

One final prophecy: In the third year of soviet rule in America, you will no longer chew gum!

August 17, 1934

Workshop Talks

By James Cnnolly

Socialism is a foreign importation!

I know it because I read it in the papers. I also know it to be the case because in every country I have graced with my presence up to the present time, or have heard from, the possessing classes through their organs in the press, and their spokesmen upon the platform have been vociferous and insistent in declaring the foreign origin of Socialism.

In Ireland Socialism is an English importation, in England they are convinced it was made in Germany, in Germany it is a scheme of traitors in alliance with the French to disrupt the Empire, in France it is an accursed conspiracy to discredit the army which is destined to reconquer Alsace and Lorraine, in Russia it is an English plot to prevent Russian extension towards Asia, in Asia it is known to have been set on foot by American enemies of Chinese and Japanese industrial progress, and in America it is one of the baneful fruits of unrestricted pauper and criminal immigration.

All nations today repudiate Socialism, yet Socialist ideas are conquering all nations. When anything has to be done in a practical direction toward ameliorating the lot of the helpless ones, or towards using the collective force of society in strengthening the hands of the individual it is sure to be in the intellectual armory of Socialists the right weapon is found for the work.

A Case in Point

There are tens of thousands of hungry children in New York today as in every other large American city, and many well-meant efforts have been made to succor them. Free lunches have been opened in the poorest districts, bread lines have been established and charitable organizations are busy visiting homes and schools to find out the worst cases. But all this has only touched the fringe of the destitution, with the additional aggravation that anything passing through the hands of

these charitable committees usually cost ten times as much for administration as it bestows on the object of its charity.

Also that the investigation is usually more effectual in destroying the last vestiges of self-respect in its victims than in succoring their needs.

In the midst of this difficulty Superintendent Maxwell of the New York Schools sends a letter to a committee of thirteen charitable organizations which had met together to consider the problem, and in this letter he advocates the method of relieving distress long since initiated by the Socialist representatives in the Municipality of Paris. I quote from the New York World:

“A committee of seven was appointed to inquire more fully into the question of feeding school children and to report at a subsequent meeting. School Superintendent Maxwell sent a letter advocating the establishment in New York schools with city money of lunch kitchens, these to sell food at actual cost and to give to needy children tickets just like those paid for, to the end that no child might know that his fellow was eating at the expense of the city by the color of his ticket. This is done in Paris.”

Contrast this solicitude for the self-respect of the poor children, recognized by Superintendent Maxwell in the plan of these “foreign Socialists” with the insulting methods of the capitalist “bread lines” and charitable organizations in general.

But all the same it is too horrible to take practical examples in relieving the distress caused by capitalist society from pestilent agitators who wish to destroy the society whose victims they are succoring, and mere foreigners, too. The capitalist method of parading mothers and children for an hour in the street before feeding them is more calculated to build up the proper degree of pride in the embryo American citizens; and make them appreciate the benefits their fathers and brothers are asked to vote for.

Read this telling how hungry children and mothers stood patiently waiting for a meal on the sidewalk, and whoop it up for pure ecstasy of joy that you are permitted to live in a system of society wherein a great metropolitan daily thought that the fact of five hundred children getting a “hearty luncheon” was remarkable enough to deserve a

paragraph:

“Five hundred ill-fed children who attend the schools on the lower east side got a hearty luncheon yesterday when the first of the children’s lunchrooms was opened at Canal and Forsyth streets. Long before noon there was a large gathering of children, some of them accompanied by their mothers, awaiting the opening of the doors.”

Well, I am not interested in internationalism. This country is good enough for me.

Is that so? Say: Are you taking a share in the Moscow Windau-Rydinsk Railway?

“No, where is that?”

My dear friend, where that railway runs has nothing to do with you. What you have to do is simply to take a share, and then go and have a good time whilst the Russian railway workers, whom you do not know, working in a country you never saw, speaking a language you don’t understand, earn your dividend by the sweat of their brows.

Curious, ain’t it?

We Socialists are always talking about the international solidarity of labor, about the oneness of our interests all over the world, and ever and anon working off our heaving chests a peroration on the bonds of fraternal sympathy which should unite the wage slaves of the capitalist system.

But there is another kind of bond - Russian railway bonds - which join, not the workers, but the idlers of the world in fraternal sympathy, and which creates among the members of the capitalist class a feeling of identity of interest, of international solidarity, which they don’t perorate about but which is most potent and effective notwithstanding.

You do not fully recognize the fact that the internationality of Socialism is at most but a lame and halting attempt to create a counterpoise to the internationality of capitalism. Yet so it is.

Here is a case in point. The Moscow-Windau-Rydinsk railway is, as its name indicates, a railway running, or proposed to be run, from one part of Russia to another. You would think that that concerned the Russian people only, and that our patriotic capitalist class, always so ready to declare against working class

Socialists with international sympathies, would never look at it or touch it.

You would not think that Ireland, for example - whose professional patriots are forever telling the gullible working men that Ireland will be ruined for the lack of capital and enterprise - would be a good country to find money in to finance a Russian railway.

Yet, observe the fact. All the Dublin papers of Monday, June 12, 1899, contained the prospectus of this far away Russian railway, offered for the investment of Irish capitalists, and offered by a firm of London stockbrokers who are astute enough not to waste money in endeavoring to catch fish in waters where they were not in the habit of biting freely.

And in the midst of the Russian revolution (of 1905) the agents of the Czar succeeded in obtaining almost unlimited treasures in the United States to pay the expenses of throttling the infant Liberty.

As the shares in Russian railways were sold in Ireland, as Russian bonds were sold in America, so the shares in American mines, railroads and factories are bought and sold on all the stock exchanges in Europe and Asia by men who never saw America in their lifetime.

Now, let us examine the situation, keeping in mind the fact that this is but a type of what prevails all round; you can satisfy yourself on that head by a daily glance at our capitalist papers.

Capital is International

The shares of Russian railways, African mines, Nicaraguan canals, Chilean gas works, Norwegian timber, Mexican water works, Canadian fur trappings, Australian kauri slave trade, Indian tea plantations, Japanese linen factories, Chinese cotton mills, European national and municipal debts, United States bonanza farms are bought and sold every day by investors, many of whom never saw any one of the countries in which their money is invested, but who have, by virtue of so investing, a legal right to a share of the plunder extracted under the capitalist system from the wage workers whose bone and sinew earn the dividends upon the bonds they have purchased.

When our investing classes purchase a share in any capitalist concern, in any country whatsoever, they do so, not in order to build up a useful industry, but because the act of purchase endows them

with a prospective share of the spoils it is proposed to wring from labor.

Therefore, every member of the investing classes is interested to the extent of his investments, present or prospective, in the subjection of Labor all over the world.

That is the internationality of Capital and Capitalism.

The wage worker is oppressed under this system in the interest of a class of capitalist investors who may be living thousands of miles away and whose very names are unknown to him.

He is, therefore, interested in every revolt of Labor all over the world, for the very individuals against whom that revolt may be directed may - by the wondrous mechanism of the capitalist system - through shares, bonds, national and municipal debts - be the parasites who are sucking his blood also.

That is one of the underlying facts inspiring the internationalism of Labor and Socialism.

But the Socialist proposals, they say, would destroy the individual character of the worker. He would lean on the community, instead of upon his own efforts.

Yes: Giving evidence before the Old Age Pensions' Committee in England, Sir John Dorrington, M.P., expressed the belief that the "provision of Old Age Pensions by the State, for instance, would do more harm than good. It was an objectionable principle, and would lead to improvidence."

There now! You will always observe that it is some member of what an Irish revolutionist called "the canting, fed classes," who is anxious that nothing should be done by the State to give the working class habits of "improvidence," or to do us any "harm." Dear, kind souls!

To do them justice they are most consistent. For both in public and private their efforts are most whole-heartedly bent in the same direction, viz., to prevent improvidence - ON OUR PART.

They lower our wages - to prevent improvidence; they increase our rent - to prevent improvidence, they periodically suspend us from our employment - to prevent improvidence, and as soon as we are worn out in their service they send us to a semi-convict establishment, known as the Workhouse, where we are scientifically starved to death - to prevent

improvidence.

Old Age Pensions might do us harm. Ah, yes! And yet, come to think of it, I know quite a number of people who draw Old Age Pensions and it doesn't do them a bit of harm. Strange, isn't it?

Then all the Royal Families have pensions, and they don't seem to do them any harm; royal babies, in fact, begin to draw pensions and milk from a bottle at the same time.

Afterwards they drop the milk, but they never drop the pension - nor the bottle.

Then all our judges get pensions, and are not corrupted thereby - at least not more than usual. In fact, all well-paid officials in governmental or municipal service get pensions, and there are no fears expressed that the receipt of the same may do them harm.

But the underpaid, overworked wage-slave. To give him a pension would ruin his moral fiber, weaken his stamina, debase his manhood, sap his integrity, corrupt his morals, check his prudence, emasculate his character, lower his aspirations, vitiate his resolves, destroy his self-reliance, annihilate his rectitude, corrode his virility - and - and - other things.

Let us be practical. We want something pr-r-ractical.

Always the cry of hum-drum mediocrity, afraid to face the stern necessity for uncompromising action. That saying has done more yeoman service in the cause of oppression than all its avowed supporters.

The average man dislikes to be thought unpractical, and so, while frequently loathing the principles or distrusting the leaders of the particular political party he is associated with, declines to leave them, in the hope that their very lack of earnestness may be more fruitful of practical results than the honest outspokenness of the party in whose principles he does believe.

In the phraseology of politics, a party too indifferent to the sorrow and sufferings of humanity to raise its voice in protest, is a moderate, practical party; whilst a party totally indifferent to the personality of leaders, or questions of leadership, but hot to enthusiasm on every question affecting the well-being of the toiling masses, is an extreme, a dangerous

party.

Yet, although it may seem a paradox to say so, there is no party so incapable of achieving practical results as an orthodox political party; and there is no party so certain of placing moderate reforms to its credit as an extreme - a revolutionary party.

The possessing classes will and do laugh to scorn every scheme for the amelioration of the workers so long as those responsible for the initiation of the scheme admit as justifiable the "rights of property"; but when the public attention is directed towards questioning the justifiable nature of those "rights" in themselves, then the master class, alarmed for the safety of their booty, yield reform after reform - in order to prevent revolution.

Moral - Don't be "practical" in politics. To be practical in that sense means that you have schooled yourself to think along the lines, and in the grooves those who rob you would desire you to think.

In any case it is time we got rid of all the cant about "politics" and "constitutional agitation" in general. For there is really no meaning whatever in those phrases.

Every public question is a political question. The men who tell us that Labor questions, for instance, have nothing to do with politics, understand neither the one nor the other. The Labor Question cannot be settled except by measures which necessitate a revision of the whole system of society, which, of course, implies political warfare to secure the power to effect such revision:

If by politics we understand the fight between the outs and ins, or the contest for party leadership, then Labor is rightly supremely indifferent to such politics, but to the politics which center round the question of property and the administration thereof Labor is not, cannot be, indifferent.

To effect its emancipation Labor must reorganize society on the basis of labor; this cannot be done while the forces of government are in the hands of the rich, therefore the governing power must be wrested from the hands of the rich peaceably if possible, forcibly if necessary.

In the phraseology of the master class and its pressmen the trade unionist who is not a Socialist is more practical than he who is, and the worker who is

neither one nor the other but can resign himself to the state of slavery in which he was born, is the most practical of all men.

The heroes and martyrs who in the past gave up their lives for the liberty of the race were not practical, but they were heroes all the same.

The slavish multitude who refused to second their efforts from a craven fear lest their skins might suffer were practical, but they were soulless serfs, nevertheless.

Revolution is never practical - until the hour of the Revolution strikes. Then it alone is practical, and all the efforts of the conservatives and compromisers become the most futile and visionary of human imaginings.

For that hour, let us work, think and hope; for that hour let us pawn our present ease in hopes of a glorious redemption; for that hour let us prepare the hosts of Labor with intelligence sufficient to laugh at the nostrums dubbed practical by our slave-lords, practical for the perpetuation of our slavery; for that supreme crisis of human history let us watch, like sentinels, with weapons ever ready, remembering always that there can be no dignity in Labor until Labor knows no master.

Would you confiscate the property of the capitalist class and rob men of that which they have, perhaps, worked a whole life time to accumulate?

Yes sir, and certainly not.

We would certainly confiscate the property of the capitalist class, but we do not propose to rob anyone. On the contrary, we propose to establish honesty once and forever as the basis of our social relations. This Socialist movement is indeed worthy to be entitled The Great Anti-Theft Movement of the Twentieth Century.

You see, confiscation is one great certainty of the future for every businessman outside the trust. It lies with him to say if it will be confiscation by the Trust in the interest of the Trust, or confiscation by Socialism in the interest of All.

If he resolves to continue to support the capitalist order of society he will surely have his property confiscated. After having, as you say, "worked for a whole lifetime to accumulate" a fortune, to establish a business on what he imagined would be a sound foundation, on some fine day the Trust will enter into competition with him, will invade his market, use

their enormous capital to undersell him at ruinous prices, take his customers from him, ruin his business, and finally drive him into bankruptcy, and perhaps to end his days as a pauper.

That is capitalist confiscation! It is going on all around us, and every time the business man who is not a Trust Magnate votes for capitalism, he is working to prepare that fate for himself.

On the other hand, if he works for Socialism it also will confiscate his property. But it will only do so in order to acquire the industrial equipment necessary to establish a system of society in which the whole human race will be secured against the fear of want for all time, a system in which all men and women will be joint heirs and owners of all the intellectual and material conquests made possible by associated effort.

Socialism will confiscate the property of the capitalist and in return will secure the individual against poverty and oppression; it, in return for so confiscating, will assure to all men and women a free, happy and unanxious human life. And that is more than capitalism can assure anyone to-day.

So you see the average capitalist has to choose between two kinds of confiscation. One or the other he must certainly endure. Confiscation by the Trust and consequently bankruptcy, poverty and perhaps pauperism in his old age, or -

Confiscation by Socialism and consequently security, plenty and a Care-Free Life to him and his to the remotest generation.

Which will it be?

But it is their property. Why should Socialists confiscate it?

Their property, eh? Let us see: Here is a cutting from the *New York World* giving a synopsis of the Annual Report of the Coats Thread Company of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, for 1907. Now, let us examine it, and bear in mind that this company is the basis of the Thread Trust, with branches in Paisley, Scotland, and on the continent of Europe.

Also bear in mind that it is not a "horrible example," but simply a normal type of a normally conducted industry, and therefore what applies to it will apply in a greater or less degree to all others.

This report gives the dividend for the year at 20 per cent per annum. Twenty

per cent dividend means 20 cents on the dollar profit. Now, what is a profit?

According to Socialists, profit only exists when all other items of production are paid for. The workers by their labor must create enough wealth to pay for certain items before profit appears. They must pay for the cost of raw material, the wear and tear of machinery, buildings, etc. (the depreciation of capital), the wages of superintendence, their own wages, and a certain amount to be left aside as a reserve fund to meet all possible contingencies. After, and only after, all these items have been paid for by their labor, all that is left is profit.

With this company the profit amounted to 20 cents on every dollar invested.

What does this mean? It means that in the course of five years - five times 20 cents equals one dollar - the workers in the industry had created enough profit to buy the whole industry from its present owners. It means that after paying all the expenses of the factory, including their own wages, they created enough profit to buy the whole building, from the roof to the basement, all the offices and agencies, and everything in the shape of capital. All this in five years.

And after they had so bought it from the capitalists it still belonged to the capitalists.

It means that if a capitalist had invested \$1,000 in that industry, in the course of five years he would draw out a thousand dollars, and still have a thousand dollars lying there untouched; in the course of ten years he would draw two thousand dollars, in fifteen years he would draw three thousand dollars. And still his first thousand dollars would be as virgin as ever.

You understand that this has been going on ever since the capitalist system came into being; all the capital in the world has been paid for by the working class over and over again, and we are still creating it, and recreating it. And the oftener we buy it the less it belongs to us.

The capital of the master class is not their property; it is the unpaid labor of the working class - "the hire of the laborer kept back by fraud."

Oh, the capitalist has his anxieties too. And the worker has often a good time.

Sure: Say, where were you for the

holidays?

Were you tempted to go abroad? Did you visit Europe? Did you riot, in all the abandonment of a wage slave let loose, among the pleasure haunts of the world?

Perhaps you went to the Riviera; perhaps you luxuriated in ecstatic worship of that glorious bit of nature's handiwork where the blue waters of the Mediterranean roll in all their entrancing splendor against the shores of classic Italy.

Perhaps you rambled among the vine-clad hills of sunny France, and visited the spots hallowed by the hand of that country's glorious history.

Perhaps you sailed up the castellated Rhine, toasted the eyes of bewitching German frauleins in frothy German beer, explored the recesses of the legend haunted Hartz mountains, and established a nodding acquaintance with the Spirit of the Brocken.

Perhaps you traversed the lakes and fjords of Norway, sat down in awe before the neglected magnificence of the Alhambra, had a cup of coffee with Menelik of Abyssinia, smelt afar off the odors of the streets of Morocco, climbed the Pyramids of Egypt, shared the hospitable tent of the Bedouin, visited Cyprus, looked in at Constantinople, ogled the dark-eyed beauties of Circassia, rubbed up against the Cossack in his Ural mountains, or...

Perhaps you lay in bed all day in order to save a meal, and listened to your wife wondering how she could make ends meet with a day's pay short in the weekly wages.

And whilst you thus squandered your substance in riotous living, did you ever stop to think of your master - your poor, dear, overworked, tired master?

Did you ever stop to reflect upon the pitiable condition of that individual who so kindly provides you with employment, and does no useful work himself in order that you may get plenty of it?

When you consider how hard a task it was for you to decide in what manner you should spend your Holiday; where you should go for that ONE DAY, then you must perceive how hard it is for your masters to find a way in which to spend the practically perpetual holiday which you force upon them by your love for work.

Ah, yes, that large section of our masters who have realized that ideal

of complete idleness after which all our masters strive, those men who do not work, never did work, and with the help of God and the ignorance of the people - never intend to work, how terrible must be their lot in life!

We, who toil from early morn till late at night, from January till December, from childhood to old age, have no care or trouble or mental anxiety to cross our mind - except the landlord, the fear of loss of employment, the danger of sickness, the lack of common necessities, to say nothing of luxuries, for our children, the insolence of our superiors, the unhealthy condition of our homes, the exhausting nature of our toil, the lack of all opportunities of mental cultivation, and the ever-present question whether we shall shuffle off this mortal coil in a miserable garret, be killed by hard work, or die in the Poorhouse.

With these trifling exceptions we have nothing to bother us; but the boss, ah, the poor, poor boss!

He has everything to bother him. Whilst we are amusing ourselves in the hold of a ship shoveling coal, swinging a hammer in front of a forge, toiling up a ladder with bricks, stitching until our eyes grow dim at the board, gaily riding up and down for twelve hours per day, seven days per week, on a trolley car, riding around the city in all weather with teams or swinging by the skin of our teeth on the iron framework of a skyscraper, standing at our ease OUTSIDE the printing office door listening to the musical click of the linotype as it performs the work we used to do INSIDE, telling each other comforting stories about the new machinery which takes our places as carpenters, harness-makers, tinsmith-workers, laborers, etc., in short whilst we are enjoying ourselves, free from all mental worry.

Our unselfish tired-out bosses are sitting at home, with their feet on the table, softly patting the bottom button of their vests.

Working with their brains. Poor bosses! Mighty brains!

Without our toil they would never get the education necessary to develop their brains; if we were not defrauded by their class of the fruits of our toil we could provide for education enough to develop the mental powers of all, and so deprive the ruling class of the last vestige of an excuse for clinging to mastership, viz., their assumed intellectual superiority.

I say "assumed," because the greater part of the brainwork of industry today is performed by men taken from the ranks of the workers, and paid high salaries in proportion as they develop expertness as slave-drivers.

As education spreads among the people the workers will want to enjoy life more; they will assert their right to the full fruits of their labor, and by that act of self-assertion lay the foundation of that Socialist Republic in which labor will be so easy, and the reward so great, that life will seem a perpetual holiday.

But Socialism is against religion. I can't be a Socialist and be a Christian.

O, quit your fooling! That talk is all right for those who know nothing of the relations between capital and labor, or are innocent of any knowledge of the processes of modern industry, or imagine that men, in their daily struggles for bread or fortunes, are governed by the Sermon on the Mount.

But between workingmen that talk is absurd. We know that Socialism bears upon daily life in the workshop, and that religion does not; we know that the man who never set foot in a church in his lifetime will, if he is rich, be more honored by Christian society than the poor man who goes to church every Sunday, and says his prayers morning and evening; we know that the capitalists of all religions pay more for the service of a good lawyer to keep them out of the clutches of the law than for the services of a good priest to keep them out of the clutches of the devil; and we never heard a capitalist, who, in his business, respected the Sermon on the Mount as much as he did the decisions of the Supreme Court.

These things we know. We also know that neither capitalist nor worker can practice the moral precepts of religion, and without its moral precepts a religion is simply a sham. If a religion cannot enforce its moral teachings upon its votaries it has as little relation to actual life as the pre-election promises of a politician have to legislation.

We know that Christianity teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves, but we also know that if a capitalist attempted to run his business upon that plan his relatives would have no difficulty in getting lawyers, judges and physicians to declare him incompetent to conduct his

affairs in the business world.

He would not be half as certain of reaching Heaven in the next world as he would be of getting into the "bughouse" in this.

And, as for the worker. Well, in the fall of 1908, the New York World printed an advertisement for a teamster in Brooklyn, wages to be \$12 per week. Over 700 applicants responded. Now, could each of these men love their neighbors in that line of hungry competitors for that pitiful wage?

As each man stood in line in that awful parade of misery could he pray for his neighbor to get the job, and could he be expected to follow up his prayer by giving up his chance, and so making certain the prolongation of the misery of his wife and little ones?

No, my friend, Socialism is a bread and butter question. It is a question of the stomach; it is going to be settled in the factories, mines and ballot boxes of this country and is not going to be settled at the altar or in the church.

This is what our well-fed friends call a "base, material standpoint," but remember that beauty and genius and art and poetry and all the finer efflorescences of the higher nature of man can only be realized in all their completeness upon the material basis of a healthy body, that not only an army but the whole human race marches upon its stomach, and then you will grasp the full wisdom of our position.

That the question to be settled by Socialism is the effect of private ownership of the means of production upon the well-being of the race; that we are determined to have a straight fight upon the question between those who believe that such private ownership is destructive of human well-being and those who believe it to be beneficial, that as men of all religions and of none are in the ranks of the capitalists, and men of all religions and of none are on the side of the workers the attempt to make religion an issue in the question is an intrusion, an impertinence and an absurdity.

Personally I am opposed to any system wherein the capitalist is more powerful than God Almighty. You need not serve God unless you like, and may refuse to serve Him and grow fat, prosperous and universally respected. But if you refuse to serve the capitalist your doom is sealed; misery and poverty and public odium

await you.

No worker is compelled to enter a church and to serve God; every worker is compelled to enter the employment of a capitalist and serve him.

As Socialists we are concerned to free mankind from the servitude forced upon them as a necessity of their life; we propose to allow the question of all kinds of service voluntarily rendered to be settled by the emancipated human race of the future.

I do not deny that Socialists often leave the church. But why do they do so? Is their defection from the church a result of our attitude towards religion; or is it the result of the attitude of the church and its ministers towards Socialism?

Let us take a case in point, one of those cases that are being paralleled every day in our midst. An Irish Catholic joins the Socialist movement. He finds that as a rule the Socialist men and women are better educated than their fellows; he finds that they are immensely cleaner in speech and thought than are the adherents of capitalism in the same class; that they are devoted husbands and loyal wives, loving and cheerful fathers and mothers, skilful and industrious workers in the shops and office, and that although poor and needy as a rule, yet that they continually bleed themselves to support their cause, and give up for Socialism what many others spend in the saloon.

He finds that a drunken Socialist is as rare as a white blackbird, and that a Socialist of criminal tendencies is such a rare avis that when one is found the public press heralds it forth as a great discovery.

Democratic and republican jailbirds are so common that the public press do not regard their existence as "news" to anybody, nor yet does the public press think it necessary to say that certain criminals belong to the Protestant or Catholic religions. That is nothing unusual, and therefore not worth printing. But a criminal Socialist - that would be news indeed!

Our Irish Catholic Socialist gradually begins to notice these things. He looks around and he finds the press full of reports of crimes, murders, robberies, bank swindlers, forgeries, debauches, gambling transactions, and midnight orgies in which the most revolting indecencies are perpetrated. He investigates and he discovers that the perpetrators of these

crimes were respectable capitalists, pillars of society, and red-hot enemies of Socialism, and that the dives in which the highest and the lowest meet together in a saturnalia of vice contribute a large proportion of the campaign funds of the capitalist political parties.

Some Sunday he goes to Mass as usual, and he finds that at Gospel the priest launches out into a political speech and tells the congregation that the honest, self-sacrificing, industrious, clean men and women, whom he calls "comrades" are a wicked, impious, dissolute sect, desiring to destroy the home, to distribute the earnings of the provident among the idle and lazy of the world, and reveling in all sorts of impure thoughts about women.

And as this Irish Catholic Socialist listens to this foul libel, what wonder if the hot blood of anger rushes to his face, and he begins to believe that the temple of God has itself been sold to the all-desecrating grasp of the capitalist?

While he is yet wondering what to think of the matter, he hears that his immortal soul will be lost if he fails to vote for capitalism, and he reflects that if he lined up with the brothel keepers, gambling house proprietors, race track swindlers, and white slave traders to vote the capitalist ticket, this same priest would tell him he was a good Catholic and loyal son of the church.

At such a juncture the Irish Catholic Socialist often rises up, goes out of the church and wipes its dust off his feet forever. Then we are told that Socialism took him away from the church. But did it? Was it not rather the horrible spectacle of a priest of God standing up in the Holy Presence lying about and slandering honest men and women, and helping to support political parties whose campaign fund in every large city represents more bestiality than ever Sodom and Gomorrah knew?

These are the things that drive Socialists from the church, and the responsibility for every soul so lost lies upon those slanderers and not upon the Socialist movement.

Well, you won't get the Irish to help you. Our Irish-American leaders tell us that all we Irish in this country ought to stand together and use our votes to free Ireland.

Sure, let us free Ireland!

Never mind such base, carnal thoughts as concern work and wages, healthy homes, or lives unclouded by poverty.

Let us free Ireland!

The rackrenting landlord; is he not also an Irishman, and wherefore should we hate him? Nay, let us not speak harshly of our brother - yea, even when he raises our rent.

Let us free Ireland!

The profit-grinding capitalist, who robs us of three-fourths of the fruits of our labor, who sucks the very marrow of our bones when we were young, and then throws us out in the street, like a worn-out tool, when we are grown prematurely old in his service, is he not an Irishman, and mayhap a patriot, and wherefore should we think harshly of him?

Let us free Ireland!

"The land that bred and bore us." And the landlord who makes us pay for permission to live upon it.

Whoop it up for liberty!

"Let us free Ireland," says the patriot, who won't touch Socialism. Let us all join together and cr-r-rush the br-r-rutal Saxon. Let us all join together, says he, all classes and creeds.

And, says the town worker, after we have crushed the Saxon and freed Ireland, what will we do?

Oh, then you can go back to your slums, same as before.

Whoop it up for liberty!

And, says the agricultural workers, after we have freed Ireland, what then? Oh, then you can go scraping around for the landlord's rent or the money-lenders' interest same as before.

Whoop it up for liberty!

After Ireland is free, says the patriot who won't touch Socialism, we will protect all classes, and if you won't pay your rent you will be evicted same as now. But the evicting party, under command of the sheriff, will wear green uniforms and the Harp without the Crown, and the warrant turning you out on the roadside will be stamped with the arms of the Irish Republic.

Now, isn't that worth fighting for?

And when you cannot find employment, and, giving up the struggle of life in despair, enter the Poorhouse, the band of the nearest regiment of the Irish army will escort you to the Poorhouse door to the tune of "St. Patrick's Day."

Oh, it will be nice to live in those days!

"With the Green Flag floating o'er us" and an ever-increasing army of unemployed workers walking about under the Green Flag, wishing they had something to eat. Same as now!

Whoop it up for liberty!

Now, my friend, I also am Irish, but I'm a bit more logical. The capitalist, I say, is a parasite on industry; as useless in the present stage of our industrial development as any other parasite in the animal or vegetable world is to the life of the animal or vegetable upon which it feeds.

The working class is the victim of this parasite - this human leech, and it is the duty and interest of the working class to use every means in its power to oust this parasite class from the position which enables it to thus prey upon the vitals of Labor.

Therefore, I say, let us organize as a class to meet our masters and destroy their mastership; organize to drive them from their hold upon public life through their political power; organize to wrench from their robber clutch the land and workshops on and in which they enslave us; organize to cleanse our social life from the stain of social cannibalism, from the preying of man upon his fellow man.

Organize for a full, free and happy life FOR ALL OR FOR NONE.

SPEED THE DAY!

1909

*Produced by Wellred Books and the
Workers International League
www.socialistappeal.org*