

THE NEXT STEP IN SOCIALISM.

(By Irvin E. Klein.)

Lord Lansdowne's plea for peace on the ground that military victory over Germany is not worth the price is of great significance. He is one of the foremost conservative politicians of Great Britain and the spokesman for a powerful group of capitalists who now realize that the war has become a boomerang to their interests. The rapid growth of Socialism and the increasing power of labor have filled their hearts with fear. The war is revolutionizing industry, commerce, politics and our state of society. Europe is in the grip of state socialism and is about to enter the next stage of evolution, democratic and scientific socialism.

On July 13, 1915, when the Socialist party was in despair and disheartened and became disorganized because our comrades in Europe forgot their internationalism and went into the war, the writer contributed an article to this paper, entitled, "The War vs. Socialism," wherein he stated as follows:

Many of the bourgeoisie and not a few Socialists themselves believe that Socialism has been dealt a most serious blow that will retard the movement for many years. Still more think that internationalism is dead. To them I must say that their attitude is supercritical, for the war has given Socialism an impetus that years and years of propaganda could not produce. Socialism has proved to be practical, and a step towards it has been prepared. True, the step is a step toward state Socialism, yet, nevertheless, such a step is toward the ultimate democratic and scientific Socialism.

Three and one-half years of the most terrible warfare in history certainly has proved this to be the case. Combinations and trusts have grown larger and more numerous. Industry has been socialized and control over it has been centralized in the state, so that considerable waste and inefficiency in production and distribution have been eliminated. The control of the economic life of the warring nations has been taken out of the hands of private individuals and placed in the hands of the government.

Have the governments done this out of altruistic considerations? No. They would be the last to interfere with the business affairs of their capitalists. The governments have been compelled to do this through economic necessity, in order to more efficiently attend to the needs of the nations and enable them to emerge victorious in the war.

Here we have a paradox. To preserve itself, capitalism has been compelled to institute state Socialism, which must necessarily lead to Socialism, which in turn will destroy capitalism.

Even in the United States state Socialism is making rapid strides. Its development here has been retarded owing to our lateness in entering the war. Already private control and management of the basic industries have been found to be incompetent. The railroads are already in government control. The oil industry, the mines and all other essential industries will be taken over by the government, as they were in Europe, but the process will be hastened, for the government will profit by the experience of the European nations.

Though the capitalists of the United States looked with horror upon the development of state Socialism

here, the more farsighted of them—for example, Charles Schwab and Frank Vanderlip, chairman of the American International Corporation (the largest organization of its kind in the world)—have seen its inevitability. Some are beginning to feel that it is necessary, for otherwise the United States would be the only great capitalist nation in the world that has not passed into state Socialism, which would mean that our industrial system would be inferior and less efficient than that of our allies, and that our capitalists would be at a serious disadvantage in the competition for the trade of the world after the war.

From an evolutionary viewpoint, the development of state Socialism is highly desirable. The quicker it grows, the sooner will we have Socialism. Temporarily, at least, it will benefit the capitalist. The governments will replace individual capitalists in the competition for the trade of the world. Imperialism will be more directly the concern of these governments. This is evident from the plans of the allies as formulated at the Paris economic conferences, which have laid the foundation of the world trust. The whole economic, industrial and military life of the allies, and we might practically say of the whole world, is determined at these conferences. The distribution of food, the determination of military tactics, the regulation of shipping for all the allies to eliminate duplication and waste, and the elimination of strife and commercial competition as much as possible are but a few of the many things that have been undertaken at these conferences. With the coming of the world trust capitalism has passed from the stage of national competition for trade and markets to international competition.

In previous wars capital was considered to be of primary importance, with labor but of secondary importance. To the capitalist mind labor was simply a commodity to be bought and sold. It had its price. When labor was scarce its price was high. When it glutted the market its price was low. At no time was it considered important enough to be consulted as to the question of declaring war or making peace.

But this war has disillusioned the capitalists. It is being waged upon such a vast scale that the cost is tremendous. Early in the war the financial system was stretched to the limit of safety. It was found to be inadequate to meet the situation. The result was that the rules of finance were thrown to the four winds and the banking industry was taken over by the government, so that the financiers ceased to be the important factor they were in previous wars.

To-day the war is being waged upon the product of labor. Instead of the individual capitalists taking over the surplus product of labor, the government takes it, and so becomes the exploiter. But the government does not keep the surplus product. This would be "confiscation," and, of course, capitalist governments do not believe in confiscating the profits of their capitalists though they take a small portion in the form of an income tax. The governments, therefore, give the capitalists credit for the surplus products created by the means of production and distribution owned by them, by various forms of credit and

promises to pay in the future. Already purchases on credit have grown so large that the war debts of each nation are so stupendous as to stagger the imagination.

But, while the war debts have increased to enormous proportions, the wealth of the nation has not increased to any great extent, so much

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