

Life Under Socialism

From "The Socialist Standard" of
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BEFORE Marx and Engels placed Socialism on a scientific basis those who believed that capitalism was only a passing phase in the history of the human race often endeavored to sketch plans for a future State. To-day we know that all such plans were utopian dreams. We know it because the progress that has been made in the means and methods of production has left those plans—based on the then existing means—far behind. We know, too, that any such pictures of the future we might sketch to-day, if based on our present methods of production, would be idle dreams, because all the time we are hovering on the brink of new discoveries that, at any moment, may fundamentally change our method of living. Beyond the elementary facts that we, as human beings, shall continue to need food, clothing and shelter, and shall be obliged to obtain them by some labour process, the future is unknown, and all efforts to life the veil, or plan details of the future, are waste of time and energy.

The Socialist does not pretend to foretell the future. All that he claims is that he understands the present, with its class ownership of the means of life and the consequent enslavement of his class. The defenders and agents of the ruling class deny this enslavement and claim that Socialism would result in loss of liberty to the individual. It is evident, however, that class ownership and control implies a class that is subjugated and therefore without liberty.

Socialism, on the other hand, being a system of society where the means

of life are owned in common and democratically controlled, must give the maximum freedom to the individual because there is equality of ownership and control.

Under capitalism the worker is subjected to restrictions and rules, and subjugated to a discipline which would be hard to beat. It is only the master class that possesses liberty, and their liberty means working class slavery.

The Materialist Conception of History, discovered by Marx, Engels and Morgan, besides assisting to place Socialism on a scientific basis and explaining history, also explains the present and makes it clear to us why we cannot foretell the future. The intellectual life and institutions of society are the result of—and can only be explained by—the means and methods of producing and distributing wealth. As we cannot foretell the future development of the means of life, the institutions, intellectual life, and general conditions must remain hidden.

Of what does the intellectual life of society consist? After the commercial and technical sides (which are obviously determined in their nature by the means and methods of production) comes politics. Analyse politics and we find, first, international relations, treaties, diplomacy, and all the quarrels and agreements between the ruling class of different nations. This is the territorial side and divides the working class by boundaries for the purpose of arranging exploitation. Secondly, the legal changes and social reforms made necessary by the continual changes in the means and methods of production and distribution. The poverty of the working class increases because the social system is out of harmony with the means and methods of production; and this causes numerous disputes between capitalists and workers. The settlement or prevention of these disputes is a constant theme for discussion in Parliament and in the Press. Every debate in the House of Commons is, in one form or another, the outcome of social conditions in process of change. Social relationships, the relations between man and man, or between class and class, do not stand still; and the cause of their change is the evolution of the material things—tools, machinery, etc.—on which man depends for his subsistence.

The political history of the past has been a succession of struggles 'twixt subject and ruling classes for the control of power. With the necessary physical force on its side to dominate society, each class has in its turn secured its position as far as possible, and settled down to enjoy the fruits of victory. No previous class in history, rising to power, has ever doubted its ability to use it—why should the working class?

The forerunners of the modern capitalist class in the sixteenth century were themselves a subject class. They threw off the yoke of the lords and monarchy, and commenced their rule with no settled policy beyond the determination to be masters of society. Their policy has never been any different down to the present day. The

executive government deals with every situation as it arises. They cannot tell what problems will call for settlement in a year's time. Not knowing what the conditions will be, the problems that result from them cannot be known, consequently every act of government can only be an expedient to prevent friction, to avert a crisis, or to restore a balance that has been upset by changes in the means of producing wealth, and so preserve the even continuity of capitalist rule.

In short, history and experience tell us that it is impossible to foretell the future. Why should we try to do so? What we are concerned with is the present—how to make the best of life

now. How do the ruling class achieve that? By using the power conceded to them by the bulk of society, the working class. While the workers are asking questions about the details of a system which they can only arrange in accordance with the stage of development reached by the means of production, they are neglecting to understand and grasp their opportunities to-day. Is it not sufficient for the workers that they should be free from the domination of the capitalist class, and, controlling their own destinies, shape their lives in accordance with their knowledge of nature? What have they to fear when free? What must they suffer when not free?

Paper Money and The Gold Standard

(The following article from the London "Common Sense," will be useful to those studying the problem of high prices. The author of the article is a noted economist, F. W. Hirst, late editor of the "Economist," (London) now editor of "Common Sense.")

DURING the last week the Editor has spoken three times—on the Newcastle Exchange, in Rochdale, and in London—on the subject of the depreciation of paper money. He ventures to submit his facts, arguments, and conclusions to readers of Common Sense—Judging by the world's experience, past and present, an inconvertible paper currency, such as we now possess, is a positive danger to society. It is the natural resort of a bankrupt State. A Bradbury which calls itself a pound, costs perhaps a penny to produce. But in some countries small paper money (e.g., paper kopeks in Russia) has a purchasing power which is less than the cost of production. A printing press is much more convenient than a mint. A ton of paper is so much easier to acquire than a ton of gold or silver. If a Government is spending more than its revenue, what more easy than to meet the deficit by printing paper money? As a Government gets into greater and greater difficulties, it relies more and more upon the printing press. As the supply of the commodity called paper money increases its value naturally diminishes. Taxes and loans bring in less and less because they are paid in such money.

A depreciating paper currency also means, of course, rising prices. And rising prices cause popular discontent, leading perhaps to revolution. People with small fixed incomes are being ruined all over Europe. By a judicious restriction of the paper currency we could easily restore the gold standard. As to dumping, a curious idea has been started that a depreciating currency assists exports and encourages foreign trade. If so, our chief competitors before the war should have been Portugal and Honduras.

During the past few weeks (partly as a consequence of Professor Cannan's vigorous intervention before the Profiteering Tribunal at Oxford) public attention has suddenly been called to the price of gold. Before the war there was, in a sense, no price of gold, because the gold sovereign was

our standard of exchange and measure of value. As a matter of fact, the standard ounce for coinage purposes before the war contained one-twelfth of alloy. The price of an ounce of pure gold was 85s., and the standard ounce was bought by the Mint for 77s. 10½d. In other words, an ounce of pure gold (with the help of alloy) would be coined into about 4 pounds five shillings. For some absurd reason the one pound Bradbury is still called sterling for the purpose of foreign exchanges. On Saturday, Nov. 29, fine gold for export fetched £5 3s. 6d. in Bradburys, as compared with a pre-war price of £4 5s. On Wednesday the price had risen to £5 8s. 7d. This fact alone proves that the Bradbury has been depreciating, and affords us a measure of its depreciation in terms of the gold sovereign.

At the end of November, 1914, only 38 millions of Treasury notes were in circulation, and only 36 millions of Bank of England notes. The figures now are 338 millions and 86 millions respectively. No wonder that prices have risen. Our prices to-day are not prices in gold sovereigns, but prices measured in paper pounds. Our experience is supported and multiplied by that of other belligerent countries where prices have risen in proportion to the expansion of the paper currency.

Owing, however, to the fact that several belligerent countries have demonetised gold, and that great silver-using countries like India and China have been comparatively unhurt by the war, the rise of gold in Bradburys has been small compared with the rise of silver. In the autumn of 1914, the price of silver was about 23d, or 24d per ounce. In the last fortnight it has been as high as 76d. per ounce, so that it has risen from about 2s. to more than 6s. To put it in another way, an ounce of gold will not buy nearly as many commodities as it would at the beginning of the war, but an ounce of silver will buy rather more. Now that these facts are becoming known, it may be hoped that the movement for sound money will begin to make progress. May we not call upon business men to give a lead to the Government and the country? Their demands should be:—

Stop public waste; cease borrowing; restrict the issues of Bradburys; restore a free gold currency; let us return to a coinage worthy of a great commercial country.

Labor Defence Fund

Send all money and make all cheques payable to A. S. Wells, B. C. Federationist, Labor Temple, Vancouver, B. C.

Collection agency for Alberta: A. Broatch, 1203 Eighth avenue east, Calgary, Alta.

Central Collection Agency: J. Law, Secretary, Defence Fund, Room 1, 530 Main street, Winnipeg.

Workers' Liberty Bonds

For the Defense of the Men Arrested as a Result of the Winnipeg Strike, in Denominations of \$1, \$2 and \$5. **Have You Got Yours Yet?**

A DAY'S PAY FOR WINNIPEG

Liberty of Speech and Action Is Worth Paying and Fighting For

Make all monies payable to A. S. Wells, Secretary of Defense Committee, 405 Dunsmuir Street, Vancouver, B. C.