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## A Few Words

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**Editor's Note:** This article comprises the substance of a lecture delivered recently in Calgary by Comrade Mrs. Hollingshead. Considerations of space have necessitated abridgment.

I shall endeavor to make my talk suitable to the understanding of those who are in the initial stages of the study of socialism, and I shall quote freely from the literature which is on sale at the table, so that buyers may get an idea of the nature of the books. The title of my subject is "A Few Words."

Words allow of greater complexity of thought than do tangible and visible things. The socialist in his selection of expressions insists on a necessity for exactness that compels a constant study and care in the use of words. Our speakers do not depend on inspiration, ecstasy or emotion, though I do not deny that emotion has its place, its proper place, in the lives of all of us. Nor do we depend on rhetoric, though many socialist speakers are masters of this art; what we do insist upon is the exact use and understanding of the terms we employ. This exactness must be behind every personal effort, for only in this way will the effect of our words endure.

A knowledge of early history can be gleaned from picture words on ancient stones, and of all materials on which history can be written; marble, brick and metal are among the most enduring, yet the words wrought in them pass away. The life of all things in the world is bounded by time, and the many accidents which are time's agents of destruction, but the impressions of the mind that are discussed and passed from mouth to mouth, aided by the glance of an eye, the tone of a voice, influence all time, even though we have nothing but memory to help us, for what is education but organized memory?

The words of Karl Marx are discussed in this way, so that the name of Marx has become immortal. Even the capitalist press took notice of the anniversary of his birth, classing him among the "great men," as the founder of modern socialism. Now we socialists do not ask you to follow blindly the leadership of great men, but we do point out to you the necessity of understanding the words of such men as Marx. Such an understanding will enable you to make good even under the present system. Marx was neither poet nor sculptor, painter nor musician, yet his memory lives through the force of his written and spoken words. These words have reference to every phase of human activity and I shall deal with one or two this evening.

The first word that one associates with the name of Marx and his theories is the word "Capital." Capital is wealth used in the exploitation of labor. The one who owns this capital is called a capitalist, and the system of exploitation of labor is called capitalism. Some political economists have laid it down that capital is eternal and people who do not know anything about political economy have unquestioningly accepted that opinion about the capitalist. You have heard the expressions: there have always been masters and slaves, rich and poor. "The poor ye have always with you." But if we examine more carefully we shall find that nothing is static, certainly no form of society.

Everything is constantly changing. The only

phenomena about which we can correctly use the words "always" are the phenomena of change. Notwithstanding this some political economists tell us that capital existed in prehistoric times; they even refer us to the animal kingdom. You are all familiar with the proverb about the diligence of the ants, how they hoard up stores for the winter, but those economists have failed to show us that the ants do so to enable certain master ants to corner these hoards with a view of selling them and making a profit out of the circulation of their capital. And there is another break in their chain of reasoning regarding the eternity of capital. They cannot show us that the term capital exists from all time. As a matter of fact the term capital in the modern sense dates no further back than the 18th century. You must understand that words are in use for a long time before they appear in the dictionary. Now the word capitalist appears in a French Dictionary published in 1802, called "A Dictionary of New Words." The compiler of the dictionary states that the word was wellnigh unknown out of Paris. He was evidently no admirer of the capitalistic mode of production. He defines the capitalist as "A monster of wealth, a man with a heart of iron, and no affections save metallic ones." I tell you this to show you that these words when compared with the age of even the human race upon the earth are of comparatively recent date. There were other forms of society before the existence of this one, and this one too will pass.

We can read the signs of the times which mark the passing of capitalism. Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, pupil of Plato lived about 2500 years ago and I am quoting now from the "Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada,"—"Aristotle, with something akin to prophetic vision laid down the axiom that slavery was necessary until the forces of nature were harnessed to the uses of man. This has now been accomplished and the necessity for slavery is past. Armed with the modern machinery of production, with steam, electricity and water power at their command, the modern workers, a fraction of society, can produce more than all society can use or waste, so much more, that periodically the very wheels of production are clogged with the superabundance of wealth, and industrial stagnation prevails."

When you have the question of unemployment, which, as you know, is the chronic condition in many industries. You will agree however, that if we had the use of what we have created unemployment would be no hardship. We could all do with a rest. The Socialists try to show that under this system of unprecedented production the people who accomplish the production are unable to obtain the use of what they have produced. That is evident to the least observant. Some speakers try to tell us how well off we are in modern days, compared to the savages who roamed the plains, but relatively we are not so well off. After all the main necessity of life is food. Well we know that savages hunted for food, and as long as the food lasted all the groups had sufficient; they knew that they could go out and get more where the last supply had come from. Now under the existing mode of production we have the contradiction of people going without in a land of

plenty, simply because the goods have been produced for the profit of the owning class, not for the use of society as a whole. The most unthinkable person agrees that there is a contradiction, and the thinking are looking for a remedy. The philanthropist makes a collection, money or old clothes. The indigent accept with gratitude such doles and when they get a chance to vote for these beneficent individuals they do so, thus in their ignorance perpetuating the system. Well, whether they are satisfied or not, the system is breaking up, we cannot put back the hand of time. It is to prepare for the liquidation of the present system that the Socialist Party of Canada holds these educational meetings.

Many people are dissatisfied with this system, and will tell you "I am a socialist of a kind, and I would like to see the workers cared for, and have all the necessities of life." And here we might discuss two kinds of socialism. I shall take the two in their historical order, as the second one grew out of the first. We must understand that modern socialism, like every other new theory had at first to connect itself with the intellectual stock in trade ready to its hand, however deeply its roots lay in material economic facts. To get an idea of the two kinds of socialism we are treating, we have to go back to the French Revolution in 1789, which overthrew the Feudal Aristocracy, the country gentry, and prepared the way for the manufacturing aristocracy, called in France the Bourgeoisie. Many people have eulogized the French Revolution. The poets of the time sang of it. "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, and to be young was very heaven." We have to admit however, that from a worker's point of view it has been disappointing in its results. We find the workers of France are still wage slaves. During the French Revolution, and subsequent to it there were not lacking philosophers who sought to work out systems for the abolition of class distinctions in society. The best known of the English ones was Robert Owen. I am not going to tell you about him tonight. I merely mention the system of socialism associated with his name. He represented what we call the Utopian Socialist.

The word Utopia is much older than the days of Owen, it takes us back to 1516 when a man called Sir Thomas More published a book called "Utopia." In which he sets forth an ideal state. Utopia was no real country, only the creation of this man's imagination. The word has come to mean a visionary scheme of reform or social theory, especially of those who fail to recognise the difficulties inherent in human nature. A large number of the more recent Utopians have been inspired by socialistic or communistic ideas. Owen was one of these visionaries. Out of the generosity of his heart he set himself to try to remove the wrongs under which the workers labored. His idea was to create a new state, a sort of combination of Christianity, Science, and Industry. I doubt not that under his arrangement we would have found life quite supportable, but such plans will not work. Philosophers like Owen do not take into account the greed of ordinary mortals, especially of the class we call the idle rich. The pride of the possession of private property, the pow-

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