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## Liberalism and Socialism

THE subject of this article is Liberalism and Socialism. To do justice to the subject is not possible in the space at my disposal, but I hope to make clear the essential antagonism and conflict of ideals which exists between both these political creeds and social philosophies. Further, I trust to make clear our Socialist contention that Liberalism, once the political expression of a progressive movement, is now decadent and bankrupt of any liberating message to mankind, and that its function in that respect in these modern days has developed upon the Socialist movement.

Before proceeding with the subject proper, I wish you to disconnect in your minds any association between Liberalism as an historical movement and the Liberal parties of everyday current politics. Those parties calling themselves Liberal are trading on the traditions attached to the name, and are well recognized as the ins or the outs of the shuffling game for the spoils of office. It is, in fact, significant of the decadence of Liberalism that it is without distinctive party expression on the political field today.

The roots of both the Liberal and Socialist movements are to be found in the economic conditions of their respective epochs.

Karl Marx has somewhere said that it is axiomatic in the science of political economy "that all true political representation must be, and can only be, based on definite economic interests." This axiom, or universally accepted truth, in the science of political economy is well worth noting, as it contains within it a guide to working class political activity.

The sixteenth century marked the later and flourishing period of what is known as the era of handicraft production and of the petty trade in character with it.

A rapid change was taking place in society. The middle ages had witnessed a continuous improvement in the tools and methods of production which resulted in an ever increasing quantity of surplus products for exchange. This increase of commodities for sale stimulated trade and commerce between countries. New routes to the far east and the new continent of America had been discovered, and settlement of the latter begun. The beginnings of the world market appear. This expanded market reaching upon production stimulated productive activity and enterprise, and handicraft methods in one industry after another began to give place to manufacture with sub-division and co-operation of labor in the factory. Work for a livelihood, which had been characteristic of handicraft production, began to give way to investment for profit characteristic of capitalist enterprises. This was a shift of base, revolutionary in character and consequences. For the craftsman, as individual producer starting and completing the product, independent because he owned his means of production, is now being driven off the market by the new superior methods of production, and reduced to the status of a dependent, propertyless proletarian.

These great changes in the social economy of the period mark the rise of the commercial and industrial middle class to a position of importance in the State. Their interests were now challenging the landed interests for first place in economic importance, but so far, they were without that political power which had become necessary to safeguard and to further their interests prosperously.

**THESE ARE THE**

**Socialist Party of Canada**

**CANDIDATES**

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**VANCOUVER ELECTORAL DISTRICT**

**DENNIS, J.**  
**EARP, Sidney**  
**HARRINGTON, John David**  
**McQUOID, William**  
**SMITH, James Ferguson**  
**STEPHENSON, Christopher**

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**PRINCE RUPERT ELECTORAL**  
**DISTRICT**  
**BURROUGH, J. H.**

Feudalism was a system of status based upon land tenure in which no man could be either lordless or landless, though long before the sixteenth century there were considerable and increasing exceptions to the ancient rule. Its institutions, laws, and customs were obstacles to the mounting ambitions of the middle class in their pursuit of wealth. In every channel of trade, in every avenue of productive enterprise they met with the monopolizing privileges of the feudal barons or the interfering regulations of the corporate guilds. There were restrictions against the acquirement of property; there were imposts to be paid in every port of landing and in every market place, and tolls on every highway which wound its way through a lord's jurisdiction. The guilds regulated prices and qualities of goods, and how and where they could be produced.

And so, out of this social situation Liberalism and its doctrines evolved as the expression of middle class revolt.

As bearing on the Materialistic Conception of History as a theory of historical development it is to be noted that this middle-class did not of their own free will and initiative raise themselves into this position in the State, but that the developing forces of production had thrust them into importance and finally into the open class war against the landed aristocracy for the overthrow of the unprogressive feudal order. The middle-class or bourgeoisie were, for the time being progressive in this sense, that though inspired by their own economic interests while carrying on their ultimately victorious struggle with the feudal landed interests, they were the blind, unconscious agents in freeing the forces of production from the institutional bonds of feudalism. In this sense Liberalism was also progressive.

By their slogans and war cries the liberal bourgeoisie gave moral terms to their economic necessities. But these moral terms, when translated into the economic terms which alone are capable of defining the issues and motives inspiring the class struggles of history, were individual liberty to acquire property, freedom in production and trade, freedom of contract, equality before the law and special privileges to none, especially none to the landed nobility.

In its formative days as a political creed, not only were the ideals of Liberalism of freedom on an individual property basis progressive, but also they were capable of appealing to the self-interest of the masses of men, because in an age of small scale production it was comparatively easy to acquire the inexpensive means of production, and apparatus of trade.

But today, production and trade on the grand scale require huge capital and credit for equipment and operation. The independent self-sufficient craftsman owning his own tools is of the past, and is forced, as such, out of one industry after another by the competition of the mass of the laboring population, divorced from ownership in the means of production, a propertyless proletarian.

What has the Liberal to say in this modern situation to the proletarian? Only to repeat the traditional cries of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Today we have the gigantic industrial equipment and the apparatus of trade owned by a numerically small class and operated for their profit. Individual property in these things is an utter impossibility for the commonality of men.

How then shall the common man satisfy physical need and psychological instinct for control over his means of life in our day? "There is only one way," says the Socialist, carrying the message of Socialism, "and that is by social ownership of the means of production."

Nevertheless, a warning; the Liberal's phrases are seductive. Is he what is known as a constructive Liberal? Remember those four old men at the Peace Conference. All Liberals. Or are they Liberal reformers under the guise of Laborism or of Socialism? Beware of them. They would dull the edge of your spirit of revolt by soft ideals and soft phrases of social reform through the co-operation of classes.

In spite of all the workmen's compensations, mothers' pensions, free hospitals and such like betterment for the working classes, the workers to this day remain essentially enslaved. C. S.

The separation of society into an exploiting and an exploited class, a ruling and an oppressed class, was the necessary consequence of the deficient and restricted development of production in former times. So long as the total social labor only yields a produce which but slightly exceeds that barely necessary for the existence of all; so long, therefore, as labor engages all or almost all the time of the great majority of the members of society—so long, of necessity, this society is divided into classes. Side by side with the great majority, exclusively bond slaves to labor, arises a class freed from directly productive labor, which looks after the general affairs of society; the direction of labor, State business, law, science, art, etc. It is, therefore, the law of division of labor that lies at the basis of the division into classes. But this does not prevent this division into classes from being carried out by means of violence and robbery, trickery and fraud. It does not prevent the ruling class, once having the upper hand, from consolidating its power at the expense of the working-class, from turning their social leadership into an intensified exploitation of the masses.—Engels.