

# The Future of Socialism in America

(By Frank Bohn)

We Socialists, above all others in the world, are supposed to rely upon facts. We despise superstition. We deprecate pure logic. The facts, we say: the facts. Very well, let us try to cleave to the simple, common, everyday facts of this relentless world. In this article I shall set forth a few very simple facts which belong together. Put them in a row, look them over and size them up for what they seem to me to be worth.

The Socialist party received 900,000 votes in 1912 and 570,000 in 1916.

During these four years the nation made more progress toward the abolition of the competitive system and the growth of state capitalism than it made in ten years previous to 1912.

Let us see just what has been done by the Federal Government alone. A law has been enacted forcing all the railroads in America to accept the eight-hour day principle in the operation of trains. The President of the United States in demanding the enactment of the eight-hour bill, declared that the nation now sanctions an eight-hour day for all workers.

A parcels post has been established which has driven several express companies to the wall and turned over the business of thousands of country stores to the great mail order trusts.

A Federal Industrial Relations Commission has been created which takes out of the hands of Congress practically all legislation as regards the conduct of corporations doing an interstate business. That is, a commission of experts, and not the politicians in Congress, is to give legal control to American business.

The rural credits law has been passed which practically makes the national government the banker for small farmers.

But the greatest and most far-reaching event in this tremendous revolution from the old privately owned business to modern state capitalism, has been the establishment of the United States Shipping Board. This board, composed of five members, takes out of the hands of Congress all rules and regulations as regards shipping on both the inland navigable waters of the nation and the high seas. Furthermore, and this is one of the most important events in the history of the United States in a hundred years, this shipping board, with a capital of \$50,000,000, furnished by the Federal Government, is to build, lease or buy ships and operate them upon any routes it may select.

So much for the facts accomplished as regards the growth of state capitalism in America.

## The Movement for Government Ownership.

All the Hearst papers and all the Scripps-McRae papers advocate the immediate government ownership of every mile of railroad and every car wheel in the country. All the big radical magazines like the Metropolitan and Everybody's and nine-tenths of the small town newspapers, are educating their readers toward government ownership. One of the biggest daily newspapers in New York City, the Globe, during the strike of the New York Dairymen's League advocated a municipal dairy on Long Island—with sixty thousand cows, to be kept in perfect sanitary condition, and by use of the most scientific methods, to furnish dairy products for the people of Greater New York.

The great middle class, above all the professional class—the school teachers, the college professors, the editors, the lawyers, the physicians—these have been deeply injured by the high prices.

They want relief. They are going to get relief—through municipal, state and national ownership. The great army of skilled workers, organized in the various craft unions and the American Federation of Labor, are working and voting hand in glove with the professional and middle classes. By 1920 a national referendum for the public ownership of railroads, coal mines, and the greater industrial trusts would undoubtedly pass by a decisive majority.

But all this is not a movement to free the working class. It is not industrial democracy. It is merely Prussianizing America. State capitalism plus universal military service will make a new Germany out of the U.S.A. in twenty years.

Shall we fight this state capitalism? Not at all. Organize in the industries and control the machine from the bottom, instead of being controlled from the top.

The middle class in America has set out to bedevil the plutocracy. It is doing it "in proper shape." When it gets done with the job there won't be any plutocracy. Scores of billions of wealth—pretty soon half the wealth of nation—will be owned by the cities of the nation, and by the great educational and charity dispensing corporations. These great public institutions will be managed by boards of experts—sons of the middle and professional classes, trained in our technical schools and paid high salaries secure in the permanency of their jobs and honored by public acclaim even as Rockefeller and Carnegie were honored yesterday. General Goethals is such a man. Imagine Goethals trading his job and his career for those of J. P. Morgan! Morgan is the big man of yesterday; Goethals is the big man of to-day and to-morrow. The nation is changing. The world is changing.

Ahe we changing, too? I fear not. Most of our Socialist leaders are living in the past.

## Two Kinds of Socialism.

The state capitalism which we are describing, and which is now being thrown at us in enormous chunks by the middle class and the intellectuals, has been called "Socialism" by a great many Socialist leaders. Most of our official Socialist newspapers, books, pamphlets, leaflets and our Socialist speeches have advocated nothing more than state capitalism. That is what the word "Socialism" means to the American public. To this man or woman in the street "Socialism" means the government-owned railroads in Alaska, the municipally-owned street railway in San Francisco, and the new nation-owned shipping trust.

Then there is another kind of Socialism which has always been advocated by a minority of the Socialists. We industrial Socialists have argued that our ideal should not be simply economic security for the worker but industrial freedom through industrial democracy. We want to be fed but we wish to feed ourselves as free men and not by the government as slaves. Some of us have maintained pretty vociferously that we would rather be dead than be organized and driven in a servile state-owned industrial system like that of Germany. We have looked beyond state capitalism to a condition of industrial freedom. We have declared that in so far as the workers are industrially organized to-day they are empowered to take democratic action in the industries. Indeed, the United Mine Workers of America, for instance, is now actually taking a very important part in the management of the coal mines. The elected representatives of four hundred thousand railroad workers passed

an eight-hour law and then went to the President and to Congress and demanded that they ratify that law. Congress did not wish to pass the Adamson Bill. The plutocratic "Old Guard" of the United States Senate said it was time to adjourn and go to the summer resorts. Anyway, they said it was Saturday afternoon and they wanted to go to the golf links. "No," replied the presidents of the railroad brotherhoods, "you stay right here in this Senate chamber this afternoon and pass this bill. If you don't we will tie up the country so tight next Monday morning that the American people will rend you limb from limb on next election day." So the Senate endorsed the bill which had originally been passed by referendum vote of the industrially enfranchised citizenship on the railroads.

Organize the 2,000,000 railroad workers into one union. They will make servants out of all the members of Congress.

## Get This in Your Mind's Eye.

The American nation is rushing out of political government into industrial government. Congress is losing function after function. Its job is pretty nearly done. Its place is being taken by the industrial experts of the various commissions. We now have national commissions for railroads, for interstate corporations, control, for shipping and for the tariff. Add a half dozen national commissions for six more big industries and the Congressmen at Washington will sit around and draw their salaries for sucking their thumbs. The old state lines and district lines are fading. The industries are the new states of our new nation. Democratize the industries by building up industrial unions—by developing toward One Big Union.

The capture and use of the city governments is the biggest political job which we have to tackle. Right now it is possible, in every city in America, to successfully advocate the public distribution of food. The cities, ruled by the workers, can connect with the farmers' unions and so organize and control the whole food producing and distributing industry. We can do it now. In every city let us work with every labor organization and with every other force which will help to abolish the army of middle class gamblers, and keep the policemen's clubs off the strikers' heads. Right here, in the control of the cities, is where political action is direct action. But to capture and make social use of city governments we must also capture the state governments. Otherwise, the state governments will put the city administration out of business. To capture the states we must secure the co-operation of the farmers.

Let us not be afraid of "losing our principles." We "lose our principles" most rapidly when we get into endless arguments and quarrels about philosophy and about "How and when the revolution is going to be pulled off." **Socialism in the Unions and in Politics.**

On the political field there is no reason why Socialists should not work with any and all who sanction the public ownership of the industries and agree to help the labor unions. We have long since discovered that a labor union composed entirely of Socialists always fails. We now discover that a political party composed entirely of Socialists must also fail. If we can and must work in the unions with non-Socialists, we can and must also work in a labor union and farmers' party with non-Socialists. If no good reason can be alleged for staying out of these unions, what argument can be alleged for refusing to act with a radical party which will work with and for the unions!

Of course we should have a separate organization for educational and propaganda purposes only. The best organization of this sort I know of is the British Independent Labor Party. Twelve months in the year and every year it teaches socialism. During campaigns it joins with the British labor unions, I

used to despise this party. I thought that the Social-Democratic Federation of England was much more "revolutionary." Then came the big war and the British Independent Labor Party proved itself to be the soundest Socialist organization in Europe. That opened my eyes. Because they used their brains in political campaigns they did not also lose their backbone. They have set an example to all the world as regards how a Socialist movement should take political action.

The Socialist party, as a small religious sect, will always fail. Our Socialist movement, if it is to be a real movement, must keep moving.—International Socialist Review.

## THE BATTLE OF BLENHEIM.

It was a summer evening,  
Old Kaspar's work was done,  
And he before his cottage door  
Was sitting in the Sun,  
And by him sported on the green,  
His little grandchild Wilhelmine.

She saw her brother Peterkin  
Roll something large and round,  
Which he besides the rivulet  
In playing there had found:  
He came to ask what he had found,  
That was so large, and smooth, and round.

Old Kaspar took it from the boy,  
Who stood expectant by:  
And then the old man shook his head,  
And, with a natural sigh,  
"Tis some poor fellow's skull," said he,  
"Who fell in the great victory."

"I find them in the garden,  
For there's many here about;  
And often when I go to plough,  
The ploughshare turns them out:  
For many thousand men," said he,  
"Where slain in that great victory."

"Now tell me what 'twas all about,"  
Young Peterkin, he cries;  
And little Wilhelmine looks up  
With wonder-waiting eyes:  
"Now tell us all about the war,  
And what they fought each other for."

"It was the English," Kaspar cried,  
"Who put the French to rout;  
But what they fought each other for,  
I could not well make out;  
But everybody said," quoth he,  
"That 'twas a famous victory."

"My father lived at Blenheim then,  
Yon little stream hard by;  
They burnt his dwelling to the ground,  
And he was forced to fly;  
So with his wife and child he fled,  
Nob had he where to rest his head."

"They say it was a shocking sight  
After the field was won;  
Far many thousand bodies there  
Lay rotting in the sun;  
But things like that, you know, must be  
After a famous victory."

"Great praise the Duke of Marlbro' won,  
And our good Prince Eugene."  
"Why 'twas a very wicked thing,"  
Said little Wilhelmine,  
"Nay, nay, my little girl," quoth he,  
"It was a famous victory."

"And everybody praised the Duke  
Who this great fight did win."  
"But what good came of it at last?"  
Quoth little Peterkin.  
"Why, that I cannot tell," said he,  
"But 'twas a famous victory."

—Southey.

The city of Terre Haute, Ind., has entered the retail coal business and greatly reduced the cost to the consumer. Residents of the city, through the municipal market, were able to buy Indiana coal at \$2.75 a ton. Dealers were asking \$6 a ton for the same grade. The city has leased a mine and hired 200 teams to haul the coal to the city.