

RELIGION

THY NAME IS SUPERSTITION

Leaflet Number Ten

Primitive man must have been an unhappy and perplexed individual. He was surrounded by natural forces that manifested themselves both to his detriment and benefit. Thunders pealed and lightnings flashed, splitting the rock and the patriarch of the forest, and killing his companion of the chase. Flood, fire and earthquake gave their added testimony to the existence of an evil-disposed power, always near, never seen, whose awful omnipotence was beyond mortal conception. He naturally ascribed these terrors to some powerful, malignant, individual, in human shape (for he could conceive of no other man then, as now, making God in his own image) who took delight in causing sorrow and distress to shivering mortals. He was the "evil one," who needed to be appeased by bribes of good things to eat, and plenty of them. Primitive man's idea of heavenly ecstasy being to gorge himself to repletion he unconsciously endowed the figment of his brain with tastes that he himself possessed, and his conception of the attributes of his deity was necessarily drawn from the source of all his ideas—his own immediate environment. What he considered good was surely desirable to his God.

Other forces manifested themselves in an opposite direction. The warmth of the sun, the fruitfulness of the earth, the cooling breeze, the rain refreshing the parched earth, and numberless other agreeable effects could only be the results of the activity of an opposite nature to that of the evil one. This deity had to be thanked, and when a period of storm and famine gave way to one of mildness and plenty, what more natural than to ascribe it to the victory of the Good One over the Evil One? One was to be prayed to for success in the chase or in war, and for protection against the Evil One. The latter had to be appeased by the sacrifice of the most precious of his primitive wealth, in order that he might be kept in good temper.

Thus arose the ideas of God and the Devil, founded on man's ignorance of the laws that govern the forces of nature.

Every step taken by man along the pathway of knowledge has increased his skepticism as to the existence of a supernatural devil, who was responsible for the unhappiness caused by flood, drouth, famine, fire, earthquake, or sickness. He has learnt, in a large and consequently increasing measure, to control many of these forces that were wont to strike him with terror and dire forebodings when they ran amok—or at least to foretell their coming, and by preparation to minimize their effects. The science of meteorology tells him when to expect floods and drouths. By strengthening the banks of the rivers he minimizes the ravages of the former; by building reservoirs

and dams he stores up the water in time of plenty to provide against the time of scarcity, or uses it to turn the desert into a garden. The science of seismology is rapidly becoming an exact one. It has discovered the weak spots in the earth's crust, and has explained the causes of earthquakes by a perfectly natural pulling and straining of the strata in process of adjustment, and the activity of volcanoes with an understandable explanation of their causes.

Flood and fire and lightning have been chained and controlled, and made to perform in man's service, and the ancient tale that they were the manifestations of an evil supernatural power, let loose to punish man for his transgressions, or in malignant spite, is smiled at, and reserved as a tale to frighten little children into being good.

The veil that hid the unknown has been torn aside, and the terrors that were inspired by the very existence of the unknown have been brushed aside with it.

In the same way, he has discarded the idea of a beneficent supernatural deity who was his friend and protector, and the enemy of the Evil One. Observation of the effects of his own activity on the materials supplied him by nature has shown him that many of the results obtained are superior to what he had previously considered the gifts of a good spirit. With the growth of his knowledge and understanding of natural laws he can perform wonders of creation, that, in spite of the Bible, "add cubits to his stature," and multiply his strength a thousand-fold. By pressing a button he can provide or deny light to thousands of his kind. By pulling a lever he can set in motion mighty machines, his own creation, that perform the work of a host. Time and distance he has annihilated, continents and oceans are made to serve his ends, the empire of the air is surrendering to his assaults, and the heavens he scans with his telescopes, searching their innermost recesses, classifying, tabulating, weighing the planets, following them in their paths, predicting their coming and going, in perfect understanding of the laws that govern them in their movements. And in all he finds no God superior to himself. He has found that all things, animate and inanimate, but himself are the blind subjects of natural forces. He alone is able to look these mighty powers in the face, bend them to his will. He has discovered that the universe is eternal, yielding implicit obedience to inexorable cosmic laws of birth, growth, and decay, operating in an eternal cycle of change, in utter disregard of puny humanity. The light of scientific research has been turned on the dark places, and God and the Devil are rolling their blankets.

Supernatural religion has lost its hold on the masses. Priest and parson see their influence dwindling, and the ruling classes are correspondingly uneasy at the growing independence of thought among their subjects. The "divine right" of kings of all descriptions, whether they be of dynasty, or of mine, rail, and soil, is being seen in its proper light as but the might of the strong to oppress the weak. The spell of creeds and litanies is vanishing, and the disinherited are getting ready to measure their might against that of the Lord's anointed. The churches, handmaidens of the rulers, are behaving like hens that have hatched out ducklings, beating the air and waking the echoes with their cacklings of reproachful distress at the unnatural perversity of their erstwhile docile wards,

now manifesting an intention to strike out for themselves.

Militias of Christ and Forward Movements are financed by the wealthy to combat the growing tendency to independence of thought amongst the hitherto thoughtless—but all in vain.

To compensate for the vanishing efficacy of the superstitious chloroform, the rulers are strengthening their brutal forces of repression, preparing for the day when their right to rule and rob will be definitely challenged by their victims. Cadet corps, Boy Scouts, and militia are being held up to the young and thoughtless element of the working class as holy and patriotic institutions for the preservation and protection of the God-ordained dispensation of capital and human slavery.

"The dog barks, but the moon sails on."

Human society moves in obedience to laws as inflexible as those that govern the movements of the planets. Capitalist production has chained the forces of nature and broken the chains of mental enslavement. Cause and effect obtain as unceasingly and unerringly in the brains of the human race and in human institutions as in the heavens. The modern working class is fast beginning to realize that the titanic forces of modern machinery are the product of its brain and hand, responsive to its slightest touch, and that knowledge has engendered in its collective brain a growing confidence in its collective power and irresistible might. It no longer looks to heavens of brass for a supernatural savior, or to the classes above it for a Moses to lead it out of the house of bondage, but is becoming conscious of the strength that resides within itself. It is growing in the knowledge that "he who would be free, must himself strike the blow," and is equipping itself for the task that lies before it—to put the finishing touches to man's age-long struggle with nature for the means to satisfy his physical needs, by wresting the marvellous machines of modern wealth production from the hands of the few, and placing them in the hands of society.

Then, with superstition and slavery behind it, its feet for the first time planted on the soil of freedom, humanity will pass through the gates of a new dawn, and enter upon a period of achievement, for which the toilsome passage through the jungles of evolution, from cave to steel mill, has been the cruel but necessary apprenticeship.

As far as personality is concerned, a proletarian is no better equipped than a bourgeois. That which distinguishes him to this advantage from a bourgeois is not due to him as an individual, but as a member of a definite economic class. Being a member of the wage-working class, of the proletariat, he is left, by virtue of his economic condition, with no other inalienable property but his physical and intellectual labor power. This state of thing carries with it the growing understanding of the fact that his might and power are not due to his own unaided individuality, but to his connection with the labor power of his class. The proletarian is thus taught by his economic conditions that he must use his power as a social one. By this means he becomes class-conscious—conscious of the importance and power of his class in society. It is not difficult to understand that the Socialist aim of the socialization of the means of production must necessarily follow from this class-consciousness.

this class-consciousness.— Proletarian Method, by E. Dietzgen.

PLATFORM

Socialist Party of Canada

We, the Socialist Party of Canada, in convention assembled, affirm our allegiance to and support of the principles and programme of the revolutionary working class.

Labor produces all wealth, and to the producers it should belong. The present economic system is based upon capitalist ownership of the means of production, consequently all the products of labor belong to the capitalist class. The capitalist is therefore master; the worker a slave.

So long as the capitalist class remains in possession of the reins of government all the powers of the State will be used to protect and defend their property rights in the means of wealth production and their control of the product of labor.

The capitalist system gives to the capitalist an ever-swelling stream of profits, and to the worker an ever-increasing measure of misery and degradation.

The interest of the working class lies in the direction of setting itself free from capitalist exploitation by the abolition of the wage system, under which is cloaked the robbery of the working class at the point of production. To accomplish this necessitates the transformation of capitalist property in the means of wealth production into collective or working-class property.

The irrepressible conflict of interest between the capitalist and the worker is rapidly culminating in a struggle for possession of the reins of government—the capitalist to hold, the worker to secure it by political action. This is the class struggle.

Therefore, we call upon all workers to organize under the banner of the Socialist Party of Canada, with the object of conquering the public powers for the purpose of setting up and enforcing the economic programme of the working class, as follows:

1. The transformation, as rapidly as possible, of capitalist property in the means of wealth production (natural resources, factories, mills, railroads, etc.) into the collective property of the working class.

2. The democratic organization and management of industry by the workers.

3. The establishment, as speedily as possible, of production for use instead of production for profit.

The Socialist Party when in office shall always and everywhere until the present system is abolished, make the answer to this question its guiding rule of conduct: Will this legislation advance the interests of the working class and aid the workers in their class struggle against capitalism? If it will, the Socialist Party is for it; if it will not, the Socialist Party is absolutely opposed to it.

In accordance with this principle the Socialist Party pledges itself to conduct all the public affairs placed in its hands in such a manner as to promote the interests of the working class alone.

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