

Socialist Columns

Recent conversations convince me that perhaps nine out of ten opponents of socialism have in mind when they oppose it, not socialism but communism. I wish the reader would make an effort to see the difference and then ask himself whether he is not after all a good deal of a socialist.

There are comparatively few men who will openly say that they are opposed to public ownership of public utilities, there are even fewer to oppose the initiative and referendum, yet these principles properly carried out constitute the whole of socialism.

But most people have some vague idea that socialists are going to do something awful; radical just what that is they have very different and vague ideas. One thinks we would pay every one the same wages; another thinks we would let every fellow help himself to anything he wants whether he works or not. Even Roosevelt, who is supposed to be at least a well read man, ridicules this last idea under the name of socialism. I leave to the reader to judge whether he is ignorant or willfully misrepresents.

Surely there is no reader of the Review who is so ignorant as to hold such an idea of socialism as that.

Communism is expressed in the formula:

From each according to his ability to each according to his needs.

Socialism says—To each according to his services, and—if a man will not work neither shall he eat.

I merely want (PLEASE GET THIS) to make this government purely democratic by means of a perfected initiative and referendum and recall, and then have the government go into the different lines of productions, especially where there is now private monopoly, and so guarantee to all men at all times, the opportunity to work and have in return the full value of what he creates. That is, we expect any product to be sold back to him at its cost. The relative wages would be paid for different kinds of work would be regulated just as it is now by the supply and demand. Jobs that require greater skill and training would have fewer qualified applicants, hence a wage must be offered that would be an extra inducement.

Again—We merely want a government guarantee that there will always be a chance to work and buy back our product at cost.

Then what is to prevent one man from fitting himself to get the highest wages, putting in steady time and accumulating money while some other fellow shirks? Nothing! Socialists never sought to prevent it. But he could hardly invest money in business in competition with Uncle Sam who is furnishing goods at cost. He could buy better clothing, furniture, autos, a better home and more land, as much as he has any use for, but he could not run into the millions, because he could not make his money work (other people) for him, which is the only way that money increases itself.

When Uncle Sam conducts all lines of business without profit then interest rent and profits are abolished, and all the other demands of socialism accomplished.

There is always some fellow to stand by and shout: "You can't do it." Like the old mass-back who stood on the bank looking at the first steamboat and saying "She'll never go." "She'll never go." "And when she began to move smoothly across the water he shouted excitedly "She'll never stop! She'll never stop!" So at one time socialism is to this fellow a beautiful, but impractical dream, too idealistic for any place this side of heaven, and again it is the most hateful conception of the power of hell.

This pessimistic individual can recite more stories of graft than any one and seems to think the recital an argument against anything you may put forward to prevent graft. He knocks present conditions and knocks still harder any attempts to improve them. Yes! he has known labor union and socialists to sell out and it will always be the same whoever you elect to office. They'll have a political machine and graft. "You can't change human nature."

Now, we all admit that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, but we despise the idea that there is no use trying to exercise vigilance, and we insist that there are methods of controlling and influencing, even changing human nature. Has human nature changed since the early days of savagery? We think it has, but no matter, a man from this age placed among savages would fight to defend himself just like a savage. And a savage from the jungles transplanted to our civilization, and confronted with the conditions of organized society would conduct himself to some extent like a civilized man, and would be glad to be relieved of the necessity to defend his life on all occasions. This shows that conditions, and not human nature constitute the great consideration.

I doubt not that the great financial chieftains of today, born amid conditions of financial struggle, having bred into their bones by

every condition surrounding them, the lust for financial conquest and power, should be transplanted to some great co-operative commonwealth, some industrial democracy, where all had learned the advantages of industrial organization and every man's hand was not against his brother, would also soon be glad to be relieved of that ceaseless competitive struggle and be guaranteed the full product of any useful effort.

At any rate it is quite certain that anyone living amid these conditions, no matter what ideals he may have, must continue the hateful struggle and have added the insults of those who ask why he does not practice as he preaches.

Socialism is not a code of morals, it is a political science. It is not especially concerned with what would be right for one man to do, but with what would be wise for all men to do collectively.

It is as absurd to talk about practicing the principles of socialism all by your lonesome, as to talk of practicing democracy in the middle of Russia, or reciprocity on a desert island.

Socialism is not based on any merely sentimental notion of brotherhood and equality, no more than democracy is based on sentiments of patriotism. Men stop fighting each other and organize to fight for each other not from sentimental consideration for the other fellow, but because they find it PAYS. Men will learn to handle industries jointly instead of opposing each other for the same reason—IT PAYS. If you can show that this is not true in identically the same sense as the previous statement you can easily and forever destroy that "menace of socialism," if not it will swallow you.

Some people profess to believe socialism would destroy all incentive. The person who makes that statement probably has in mind some dim and hazy notion of communism. How about the incentive to obtain an education? How it has fallen away since education became a public instead of a private business! If the making of clothing should now become a public business no doubt we would all go naked. When we should find out that the other fellow could get just as good clothing and food as we by just merely working for it, we would lie right down and die. I should like to have an x-ray photo of the mental processes of the fellow who first started that incentive argument. His followers, I think, merely repeat it without any mental processes.

The public school is more radical than anything we propose. It brings no immediate results in cash and is so supported by a tax, and service furnished free. We only ask that the products of industry be furnished at cost.

"The injury of one of us is the concern of all of us."

About forty years ago, when the despised Knights of Labor made a declaration like this it was to the generalization of mankind but a form of words, without meaning, without lesson of duty.

This generation is beginning to see that it is an eternal truth and one of the greatest that ever was entertained by man.

Proposals for Street Work

Sealed proposals will be received at the office of the recorder of the city of St. Johns, until Apr. 16th, 1912, at 8 o'clock p. m., for the improvement of Seneca street from the northerly side line of Fessenden street to the southerly side line of St. Johns Avenue in the manner provided by ordinance No. 487, subject to the provisions of the charter and ordinances of the city of St. Johns, and the estimate of the city engineer on file.

Engineer's estimate is \$1,247.36. Bids must be strictly in accordance with the printed blanks, which will be furnished on application at the office of the recorder of the city of St. Johns. And said improvement must be completed on or before 60 days from the last publication of notice of proposals for said work.

No proposals or bids will be considered unless accompanied by a certified check payable to the order of the mayor of the city of St. Johns, certified by a responsible bank for an amount equal to ten per cent. of the aggregate proposal. The right to reject any and all bids is hereby reserved.

By order of the council,
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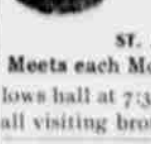
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