

An Anti-Statist Communist Manifesto

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“In vain you tell me that Artificial Government is good, but that I fall out only with its abuse. The thing – the thing itself is the abuse !” – Burke

General Principles

I

Human society can only be organized upon the basis of one or the other of the two principles of authority or of liberty. From these two principles are derived two political systems, equally broad and far reaching, though diametrically opposite in their effects, that of the one being the happiness, and of the other the misery of mankind. Beyond these two there is no political system capable of contending for supremacy in this 19th century of ours. All intermediary systems are powerless in equal degree, and can only occasion transient perturbations.

Such has been our situation for a century past, authority losing prestige on the one hand and freedom gaining on the other, but still scarcely understood. Vain attempts have, indeed, been made to reconcile the two, but being by nature incompatible the admixture has only resulted in a yet more debased blend of the two theories, in a conflict of jarring interests which only rend and damage one another.

Thus either liberty or authority each by itself and at issue with each other, must organise society. Where authority flourishes, we shall find the structure of society based upon a fundamental plan of Absolutism. Entirely ignoring the various stages through which humanity has already passed, authority affirms that the world is immutable in its primordial principles; it proceeds from God in the direct line, God the beginning and the end of all things, who has delegated to his representative on earth, Priest or Monarch (both are kings) a portion of his might and power.

The power of king or priest must not be counterbalanced by any other, he is responsible to God alone, and any attempt against his majestic authority is a direct invasion of the prerogatives of the source of all things. Heedless of the fact that the theological and metaphysical phases are spent and exhausted, authority still boldly takes up tradition and appeals to God, who by his grace directly intervenes in the ordering of things human. God, King and Nationalism, the symbols of the most formidable reaction, such is the cry and motto of authority. It believes in God, without whom it would not exist itself; in the King, who is an emanation from God, and in Nationalism, which is a mere jingo sentiment, belonging to the God idea. It has no faith or belief in the people, whose existence alone is a reality, and whose emancipation and enfranchisement it dare not permit on pain of suicide.

In order to its maintenance, the system of authority needs a religion above all. Be it what it may, religion teaches the renunciation of earthly possessions, and a love for the heavenly beatitudes. It causes uncertainty to predominate over certainty, fiction over reality, things imaginary over things palpable, falsehood over truth. It proclaims the doctrine that misery is of divine institution; that it ever has existed and ever must continue to exist in God's ordinance, who will therefore inevitably punish as a crime, any popular insurrection caused by starvation.

After the Church, the army more directly representative of the monarch's power, the mainstay of law and order, and after it, the centralised State uniting in itself all the reactionary forces required to enable it to govern, such are the natural products of authority. Freedom, with such a system, becomes illusory, since it can only exist by dint of the constant abridgement of force and of the progressive annihilation of the powers that be, whereas the whole machinery of the state

is devised on the contrary to render the enfranchisement of the people impossible, and to make the power of the government crushing. War, as a matter of course, becomes an indispensable ailment for this type of Society, with which arms, diplomacy and the tribune – the three phases of war – are necessary phenomena. It is in the shade of such a political system that financial and capitalistic feudality will flourish, since God has decreed in his infinite wisdom that the rich and the poor shall for ever form two distinct castes, one of which was created to exploit the other. This flagrant inequality borrows from its source a semblance of justice, and a sanction against which it would ill become us to protest. If the political system of Authority prevails now, the policy of Liberty will henceforth rule the destinies of the world; there is no middle path between these two extremes. Today we must have all or nothing, nothing but freedom and its creations can avail any longer to satisfy us. In the system of Liberty, God is deposed, society is the work of man, who is himself its beginning and end, and the distribution or division of earthly goods shall proceed according to the will of man, regulated by reason and justice. There shall no longer be a class to rule and dominate over another class; each member of society working for himself and for all fulfils his social duties.

All useful forces are necessary to the development of Society, and no one shall be at liberty to deprive it of any of these. God, no longer the supreme regulator of human destinies, becomes useless and misery ceases to be irremedial, for labour and intelligence must of necessity triumph over it. The Church, deriving its power from the Absolute, will disappear with it. It is no longer the State, the Army, the Church or God that will preside over the government of the world; it is labour represented by the people that will organise all things.

Religion annihilated, the people will arise from their degradation, intellectual and moral. Politics being eliminated they will emerge from their state of economical servitude, and with these will disappear the financial industrial proprietorial and capitalistic feudalism. Social science appears teaching us the uselessness and the nuisance of politics and government. The economic equilibrium realised, there will be no need of force to maintain it, war, by its nature, being a huge parasite, could only disturb and not consolidate it. Peace is the necessary resultant and sublime crowning of all the social forces directed towards labour. The latter being essentially a peace maker, the people being emancipated by the Revolution, will endeavour to guarantee the fruits of their labour and consequently the fruits of the labour of all; instead of creating as must inevitably occur nowadays new monopolies for the benefit of the few, it will extend on the contrary, these guarantees and confederate from town to town, from country to country, internationally. It makes all working men unite together, and creates what is called the life of relationship in the economical order. Is it conceivable that politics and war could find room, be it ever so small, in a Society so transformed? No, and when the constitution of labour shall have definitely replaced the constitution of the old world, the advent of the working classes will be realised with a character so imperious and fateful that the most severe justice must acknowledge its legitimacy.

II

The object of socialism is to constitute a Society founded on labour and science, on liberty, equality and solidarity of all human beings. It is consequently a mortal foe to all oppressors, of whatsoever kind, of all speculators and exploiters, be their name what it may. The first form in which oppression is manifested in organised society is the religious oppression, the divine

exploitation. Religion seeks to enslave the human intelligence, the God idea is the generator of all despotism. Man will never be free in any of the manifestations of his activity, so long as he shall not have expelled from his brain the notion of God, the product of ignorance, sustained by the exploiting priests. So long as a mystic vision of a divinity shall darken the world, it will be impossible for men to know that world, and as a consequence to possess it. It is by the aid of this notion of a God governing the world, that all forms of servitude, moral and social, have come into existence and been established religion's despotism, classes, property, and the exploitation of man by man. To enable men, therefore, to attain to freedom and to knowledge, that is to realise the object of the Revolution he must first expel God from the domain of knowledge and consequently from Society itself. We can therefore only consider as true revolutionary socialists, conscious of the object they pursue, those who, like ourselves, declare themselves Atheists and do whatever in their power lies to destroy this corrupting notion of God in the mind of the masses. The struggle, therefore, against every kind of religion, and the propagation of Atheism must form a part of every socialistic programme that pretends to give a logical exposition of the ideas, the aspirations and the object of the adepts of the Social Revolution.

III

Politics properly so-called, that is the science of government or the art of directing men gathered in social community, is entirely based upon the principle of authority, and, it being so, we oppose with all our might the reactionary notion which consists in the pretence that the revolutionary socialists must seek to seize upon the political machine, and to acquire power for themselves. We decline to recognise a divine absolutism because it can only give rise to the enslavement of reason and intelligence. Why, then, should we recognise a human absolutism, that can only engender the material exploitation of the ruled by the rulers? In this argument we are not specially concerned with any particular form of government, for all without distinction had their rise from the same source: Autocratic, Oligarchic systems, constitutional monarchy, plutocracy, the republic, as governmental forms, are all antagonistic to human freedom, and it is because of this that we are opposed to every form of government. If it be admitted that individual man has no right to govern, we cannot admit that a number of men should have this right, be they a minority or a majority. It is claimed that the theory of government is the outcome of the tacit agreement between all of the citizens for the acceptance of some form of government, but this theory is inadmissible, for such tacit agreement cannot exist since men have never been consulted anywhere upon the abdication of their own freedom.

A certain school of socialists, while sharing our ideas upon the majority of forms of government, seeks nevertheless to defend what they call the democratic state, ruling nations by means of a parliamentary system, but we argue just precisely that freedom does not exist any more in this system than in any of the others, and it is for this reason that we oppose it. Act as it will, this popular state will nevertheless require for its maintenance to appeal to the reactionary forces, which are the natural allies of authority – the army, diplomacy, war, centralisation of all the powers which operate in restraint of freedom, and the initiative of individuals and social groups. Once launched upon this arbitrary career, it is an inevitable necessity to mount up round after round of the ladder, there being no resting place. On the contrary they must be ever trenching more and more upon the freedom and autonomy of the individual until these undergo a process of complete absorption and annihilation. In opposition therefore to those who desire by means of

parliamentarianism to achieve a conquest of political power, we say for ourselves that we wish to forgo power and monopoly alike, which means that we seek to bring out from the very bosom of the people, from the depths of labour a factor more potent, that shall deal with capital and the state and subdue them. This powerful factor will be realised by the organisation of industrial and agricultural groups, having studied and being able to apply the laws of exchange possessing the key and secret of the contradictions and antagonism of the bourgeois political economy, standing possessed, in a word, of social science. And what does social science teach to those who consult it? It teaches that political reforms, as a preliminary to social reforms, are a Utopia or a mere trick and an eternal mystification, by which the radicals of every shade, including parliamentary socialists have up till now deceived the workers. Social science protests against these subterfuges and palliatives; it repudiates every alliance with the policy of parliaments. Far from expecting any succour from them, it begins its work of exclusion by eliminating politics and parliamentarianism. We revolutionary socialists desire to organise ourselves in such a manner as to render politics useless and the powers that be superfluous, i.e., that we aim at the abolition of the State in every form and variety. We are waging a battle of labour against capital i.e., against the State proprietary, financial and industrial. We pursue a warfare of freedom against authority, i.e., against the State, the respecter of religion and the master of all systems of teaching. We champion the cause of the producers as arrayed against that of the non-producers, i.e., we combat the State in its military and civil functionaries. We fight the battle of equality against privilege, i.e., we oppose the State, having all monopolies industrial, bankocratic, agricultural, etc. Now in order to subdue capital, to subjugate the powers that be, and destroy them, we in no way need to win by means of a parliamentary system that political power which as a matter of fact we seek to destroy, we do not wish, by acquiring power, to increase the number of non-producers that our socialistic organisation is meant to reduce more and more until none are left, i.e., until the complete annihilation of power, until the abolition of the State whatever its form, monarchical or democratic.

We need not waste time over those Socialists who while condemning the political action of the proletariat, at the same time wish to avail themselves of parliamentary action as a means of propaganda; such socialists are wanting in logic. If the participation of socialists in the policy of governments be condemned as fatal to the interests of the proletariat, then a propaganda in favour of parliamentary action on behalf of the proletariat can be neither good in itself nor serviceable in the development of socialism. On the other hand, as regards socialistic propaganda in times of election, all the good achieved by a candidate for parliamentary honours would be counter-balanced by the evil which he would otherwise cause, by filling the minds of the workers with notions false and reactionary, thus creating complete confusion among those who are struggling for the emancipation of mankind. The only means in our view of making the most of a period of political excitement, such as may be an electoral contest, would be to take advantage of it, to disseminate among the masses revolutionary papers, pamphlets leaflets, etc., got up specially for the occasion, and showing the people that it is not by Parliamentary means but by social revolution, that their lot will be ameliorated materially, morally and socially. Summing up we may, therefore, say that as far as politics are concerned we are Anti-Statists, and as such we abstain from taking any part whatsoever in parliamentary action, whatever be the end assigned to such action.

IV

If we are Atheists in point of philosophy, and Anti-Statists in point of politics, we are communists as regards the economic development of human society. And whereas in the elaboration of all our conceptions, we always start from the principle of liberty, we are free communists as opposed to state communists. The society that we assail has for its basis of existence the private property of all raw materials, of the soil, of the wealth below the soil, all tools, and machinery, and all capital. Private property in its turn is the direct emanation from the principle of authority, and is based upon the theory of remuneration, or reward for individual efforts. Now it is absolutely certain that there is no isolated individual effort, there can only be efforts, general and collective or common; consequently neither should there be individual remuneration or reward, and we may thus logically be allowed to declare that property is robbery.

Social wealth has a threefold source: the forces of nature, the instruments of labour, and labour itself. An individual does not create the forces of nature, and therefore he can not appropriate them to his own use; at most they are the common property of all men. An individual does not create the plant and machinery of work. He therefore cannot appropriate them to his own use. It is the generations of men that from century to century have transformed the raw materials into tools of production, and consequently the theory of plant and machinery being regarded as a stock of property held in common must be the only principle accordant with equity and justice. The individual works it is true, but his personal work, his particular endeavour, would, as it were, have no value in the immense field of activity of modern production, did he not constitute an integral portion of the work and of the endeavour collective or common of all men.

It follows therefore that private property cannot be regarded as legitimate from any point of view. Society as under its present constitution, which makes of it a pivot of its organisation, political and economical, thus merely becomes an immense financial industrial, agricultural, and mercantile Feudalism, exploiting mercilessly the countless masses of the proletariat. Everything in the regime of individual property belongs to the bourgeoisie, even including thanks to the iron law of wages, the worker himself. In the proprietary system the majority of men are condemned to work for the sustenance and enjoyment of a handful of masters and parasites.

As the ultimate expression of all other forms of servitude, the bourgeois domination has at last divested the exploitation of labour of the mystic veil that obscured it; governments, family, law, institutions of the past, as of the present have at last shown themselves in this system of society, reduced to the simple terms of wage slaves and capitalists, as the instruments of oppression by means of which the bourgeoisie maintains its predominance and holds in check the proletariat. Reserving for itself, in order to increase its wealth, all the surplus of the product of labour, the capitalist leaves for the workman only just the scanty store he needs to keep him from starvation.

Forcibly held down in this hell of capitalist and proprietorial production, it would seem as though the working classes are powerless to break their fetters, but the proletariat has at length become alive to its own condition, it is sensible that within it, exists the elements of a new society, that its deliverance shall be the price of its victory over the bourgeoisie and that this class destroyed, the classes will be abolished altogether, and the object of the revolution attained. We desire to reach this object i.e., the triumph of the revolution without stopping at any middle paths which are mere compromises putting off victory and prolonging slavery.

By destroying individual property the Communist overthrows one after another all the institutions of which property is the pivot. Driven from his property, garrisoned by himself and family

as though it were a citadel, the rich man will no longer find an asylum for his selfishness and his privileges. With the annihilation of the classes will disappear all the institutions that cause the oppression of the individual and of the social group, the only reason for which has been the maintenance of these very classes – the subjugation of the working man to his master.

Education open to all and equally placed at the disposal of all will produce that intellectual equality, without which material equality would be without value and without charm. No more wage slaves, victims of misery and wretchedness, of want of solidarity, of competition, but a free association of working men with equal rights, distributing the work among themselves, to procure the greater development of the community, the greater sum of well-being for each of its members. For every citizen will find the most extended freedom, the largest expansion of his individuality in the greater expansion of the Community.

It is hardly necessary for us to add that we fight against (on the same principle of the abolition of private property), the institution of the family, such as it exists nowadays. Thoroughly convinced partisans of the free union of the sexes, we repel the thought of marriage which institutes for the benefit of the man a new and exorbitant proprietary right, namely the right of ownership of the woman, but in order to ensure a possible establishment of the free union of the sexes, it is necessary that both the man and the woman shall enjoy the same right in society as well as have the same duties imposed on them, that is, they must be equal, a thing that is impossible, unless private property be done away with.

In the same way it seems to us superfluous to state that recognising neither boundaries nor frontiers we are concerned in working out the realisation of our aspirations, wherever the lottery of events has placed us, regarding each revolutionary associate, no matter whence he comes, as a brother, and each exploiter of humanity, whatever tongue he may speak, as an enemy. And lastly we do not believe in the advent of the new order for which we are struggling by means of legal and pacific methods, and that is why we are revolutionary socialists. The study of history has taught us that the noblest conquests of man are written on a blood-stained book. To give birth to justice, humanity suffers a thousand tortures. Ours be then the force, so often employed against us, ours the force the heritage of the people which has been wrested from it by a coalition of the clever, and from its own want of energy, ours the force less as a desideratum than a consummation, regretfully sought less as a choice than as a necessity. Ours the force as the only means of breaking asunder the iron chains that bind us!

But at the same time let also prudence and caution guide us, the caution that determines the hour for the employment of force, and the firmness that preserves and directs it, unvanquished through all obstacles. Let us mature our ideas and our aspirations. Away with reckless and useless struggles; but no more hesitation nor armistice on the day of the battle, and once having commenced the final struggle let it be no longer merely with the hope of success, but with the certainty of triumph!

So, comrades, we finish by saying we are Atheists, Anti-Statists and Free Communists or International Revolutionary Socialists.

Policy

Having stated our principles I will now briefly state what should be our policy in accordance with our principles, which can be summed up shortly as educate, educate, educate, that an or-

ganisation may spring from the body of the people prepared for action, this action to be the destruction and not reform of Government, Authority, and Monopoly, of every description.

Our Attitude Towards Other Bodies

To the individualists (anarchists or otherwise) we are opposed. We contend that capital is the result not of any one individual's labour, but of all the workers combined, not only of this but of many past generations. Therefore it would be unjust that it should be held as Individual Property. We are also opposed to the idea of every one receiving according to his deeds, that the strong, the able bodied, those well endowed by nature, are to have all they can procure, while the halt, the lame, and the blind are to be left to their own resources, or at best depend on the charity of those better off. Again, so long as private property exists, there can be no freedom for women, all the advantages of co-operative labour are lost, and an enormous amount of labour wasted in providing for separate homes, farms and what not.

State Socialists

These believe that the state should be all powerful, that it should own the land, mines, railways, machinery and means of exchange, in fact own all things and organise labour in all its branches, that their policy should be to gain possession of the state machine and then arrange everything for the people. The bureaucracy and officialism of today is not to be compared to what it must be when the state undertakes these manifold duties.

The representative farce would have to be resorted to. These representatives at once become the Authority, the Government, superior to the body of the people, and would have to be prepared with force to defend their authority against any rebellious minority.

The march of progress is against isolation and individualism on one hand, and on the other against centralisation and authority of every description. We, the Anti-Statist Communists are the pioneers of that future state of society towards which all progress tends, namely, the free association of groups of workers (call them Towns, Villages, Communes or what you will) holding the land and capital, in common, working it on true co-operative principles, federated with each other for mutual assistance, every member working according to his ability and receiving according to his needs, man and woman being then equally free, would form connections through love alone. Connections of this description would not require a State or Priest to endorse or enforce it. The bond of love would be sufficient, when it was not it would naturally be dissolved. This would be done without injury to anyone, the children being fed, clothed and cared for by the Community.

Trades Unions

Trades Unionism like Socialism, is the outcome of the greed, tyranny, and oppression of the Capitalist class. The Capitalists at first thought the unions meant fighting, and that they would be successful, they became frightened, fearing that this would mean less profits if not the total extinction of their monopoly and privileges, they roundly abused and denounced Trades Unions, and passed laws against combination; but now that the development of the commercial system and the invention of new machinery has placed the workers in a more dependent position, and

the Trades Unions are becoming little better than Benefit Societies, with an ever increasing subscription and decreasing reserve funds, helpless in the meshes of capitalism, they now tolerate and even occasionally say a good word for Trades Unions. But with the practical breakdown of Trades Unions Socialism springs forth and says the day for this unequal and losing battle between the bloated Capitalist and the starving workman for a mere increase or to prevent a decrease of wage is past. Today and from henceforth, the battle is by the workers as a whole, for the destruction of monopoly and tyranny of every description, as the only means of emancipating themselves.

As commerce grew and expanded, as fresh markets were found for commodities even faster than they could be manufactured, trade went up by leaps and bounds, when a comparative small amount of machinery was used, a large portion of the working population was employed in tilling the soil, this was the time of the prosperity of Trades Unions. Then, though the workers did not get all they wanted or were entitled to, they did by combination get some improvement in their position. But how do they stand today with depopulation of the rural districts, crowding in to the towns, an increase of population? The increased use of machinery, the ever growing force of foreign competition are all adding to the number of the unemployed. With all these forces against Trade Unions, is it possible for them to be otherwise than mere benefit Societies.

Our policy towards the Trades Union then, is to show them how this evolution has gone on in the past and will in the future; that as the commercial system expands and new machinery is invented, wealth can be produced to an unlimited extent, and comparatively independent of manual labour; the capitalists reaping all the benefit, the workers becoming more helpless and enslaved in their economical toils. That as the policy and tactics of the Trade Unions have failed to alter this in the past, so still more will they, in the future, their only hope being by developing their organisation, becoming Socialists and rebelling against a system that enslaves them, using their organisations not for a mere increase or to prevent a decrease of wage, but for the destruction of the capitalist system and the emancipation of the whole of the workers

Eight Hours Labour Movement

With reference to this, the most prominent proposal put forward by the Social Democrats. In the first place what all socialists protest against is the exploitation of the labourers by the capitalist, whatever the hours of the working day may be. So long as labour has to pay a tribute to capital and is not free we have not achieved our end, moreover, an eight hours bill or even less would not in the long run absorb the reserve army of labourers even if it was carried. Competition at home and abroad would force on the invention and use of new machinery in order to dispense with human labour; capital and machinery would be removed to other countries where cheap labour could be obtained for the benefit of the capitalists. Labour would also be intensified so that an hour's labour would mean much more wear and tear than it does now, as it does now more than it did fifty years since. For a large part of the workers, an act of this kind would be inoperative as the Factory Acts are for many women and children today, in short there would still be an ever growing army of unemployed, and the employed would be in much the same position as now. Seeing this so clearly it is not our business to advocate this palliative measure, but to criticise the action of those who do so.

The Unemployed

This question of the unemployed is one of great difficulty. Our sympathy is naturally with these starving people. But there is no special unemployed class. It is the workers, some of whom are employed, others unemployed, these constantly changing places, employed today, unemployed tomorrow; therefore, it is a question for the whole of the workers. The question is, what can we do for the unemployed portion of the workers. It appears hard to call meetings specially of the unemployed and tell them that they cannot be permanently benefited until the Revolution, and that they must starve in the meantime. The only alternative is to advocate relief works, which no Revolutionist can do. These relief works must be unproductive or productive. If unproductive, it will be task labour, with just sufficient food for the workers to keep life in their bodies until the capitalist requires their services for fresh exploitation; and even at this no society could keep an ever-increasing army of unproductive workers for any length of time.

If on productive works, they are unemployed because wealth is produced for sale at a profit, and at present no profit can be made on their labour. We have wealth, the results of labour, in abundance, and no market for it; therefore, there is no demand for their labour; and if they are set to work producing other wealth, it will cause a still greater abundance for the world's markets. This will mean a fall in prices and a reduction in wages, and the throwing out of work those at present employed. We hear even now of the unfair competition of prison labour, and this employment of the surplus labourers of our commercial system on productive works would have the same effect, only in a much greater degree. The most likely thing to occur by calling meetings specially of the unemployed is that, having their passions aroused by our denunciations of the thieving class, they will destroy a few windows. The paltry bill will be paid by an insurance company, and we lose some of our best advocates as a result. We Socialists do not want to see the aimless destruction of property, but the destruction of the property holders. In the meantime, let the starving people steal, sack shops, or what not, in preference to starving, if they so choose, it is a sign of discontent and of a determination to die fighting rather than starving. We may regard this as a sure forerunner of Revolution, but we must not let it be supposed that it is Socialism. Meetings specially of the unemployed, therefore, should not be called, but meetings of the workers as a whole should be held on every possible occasion. The principles of Socialism should be put plainly before them, and they must be told that the only remedy for their misery, poverty and constant unemployment is the destruction of a system that puts it in the power of an idle class to employ and enslave the workers, and at best to dole out a small portion of their stolen wealth as charity to those who have produced it all when starving, and that no permanent good can be done for them by relief works, charity, or, in fact, anything under our competitive commercial system, with all the means of producing wealth monopolised.

Radicalism

The official and recognised Radical party is based on what they are pleased to call liberty and freedom. Freedom meaning to them Free Trade, Free Contract, and Free Competition; and Liberty to them is the liberty to fleece the destitute and starving workers to their heart's content by the aid of these three Fs.

They will not admit that there is a class struggle going on, but contend that with the aid of these three Fs all the workers have to do is to be more temperate and thrifty, and that under this

splendid arrangement there is a chance for everyone to rise, blinding the workers to the fact that only a few can do this, and that they then leave their class and become exploiters in one way or another.

But there is an advanced wing of Radicalism formed by the workmen who having found that Toryism and liberalism were of no use to them, have gone as far as they could see or understand. They have no clearly defined principles, and, after all, only agitate for mere superficial reforms. The election of governors and the extension of the suffrage these have been agitated for about 120 years, and more strongly at the commencement than the finish. In 1770, part of the programme was adult suffrage and annual parliaments, but now it is not the question of a useless vote but food in the stomach. This question will not wait a hundred years for settlement, before this social problem the Radical stands helpless, shouting loudly about the cost of Monarchy and the pension list. This is as far as he can grasp at present, failing to see that this is a drop in the ocean compared to the robbery of the landlord and capitalist class. It is from this wing of the Radical party only that we can expect to make converts. We must, then, lay before them our principles, show them that any mere reform is useless. Urge upon them the necessity of studying this social problem, work with them when possible, but make no alliances that would cause us to sacrifice our principles in the least.

Temperance, Vegetarianism and Thrift

Many people belong to Temperance Societies, and think they have found the cure for poverty and misery by the mere abstention from drink. No greater delusion could enter the mind of man. As Socialists we admit that if people give way to drink they cannot have a clear head to understand the Social problem, and until a large part at least of the people understand this, we shall have the misery and poverty, but if a man becomes a blue ribbonite and nothing more he has done nothing towards the emancipation of the workers.

Where we Socialists fall foul of the temperance thrift and vegetarian advocates is with the iron law of wages argument. We contend, and all political economists agree with us that under a capitalist system of society, with monopoly and competition, wages are ruled by the standard of comfort, adopted by the people of a country, and always have a tendency to fall to the minimum rate or starvation point, therefore a reduction in the standard of comfort by a majority, or even a large minority, would only result in a reduction of the standard rate of wages, and be of benefit only to the capitalist class, being only of benefit to those who practise it so long as they are a small minority, if it can only affect the individual or small minority for good, and the majority for evil, it is a proof that it is no remedy for the workers as a whole.

As a proof of this argument we have only to refer to Ireland with a potato-standard, Russia black-bread, India rice, Germany and Italy with their cheap soups, and wages in all these countries accordingly low. The English workers are now complaining of the competition of other countries, particularly Germany. They are told that they are losing their trade because the German is content to work longer hours for less wages than an Englishman. This means that his standard of living is lower than an Englishman's. Are we, then, to take the advice of the capitalists, vegetarians and temperance advocates, and reduce our standard of comfort to the level of the Germans?, or, rather, should we not tell these people that so long as they advocate their doctrines as a remedy for poverty we shall oppose them? That we are determined not to lower our

standard of comfort, but rather to increase it, and at the first opportunity overthrow the system of monopoly as the only cure for poverty and misery.

Secularism

We are in accord with the Freethought party in their battle against superstition and authority divine. The people must be free both economically and mentally. Tyranny, oppression and pea-soup philanthropy on one side, and cringing poverty and hypocrisy on the other, must be put to an end. This, however, can only be done by the destruction of monopoly and authority of every description. Priestcraft is, after all, only one of the effective weapons used for keeping the workers in slavery. Freedom of thought is of small avail without freedom for all to live as freely as they think.

Land Nationalisation

We are in agreement with the Land Nationalisers so far as they advocate the abolition of private property in land; but we contend that if we had land nationalisation alone it would be the capitalists' class, who would benefit by a reduction in taxation, so long as private property in the means of production, transit, and exchange exist, the iron law of wages comes into force, and the workers will only get a bare subsistence wage. We are entirely opposed to the idea of giving compensation to the present holders, believing that their having robbed and enslaved us and our forefathers in the past does not give them a title to further enslave our children for generations to come in the form of usury, which compensation would mean. Being opposed to centralisation and authority, we are not in favour of the central state under any name or form holding the land and demanding a rent for it, but believe that it should be in the hands of the local communes or towns, and cultivated on co-operative principles, without payment of any compensation or rent whatsoever.

Co-operation

The co-operative movement started with a noble ideal: the overthrow of the commercial system by the co-operative and self-employment of the workers. This has been found impossible, and the co-operators have degenerated into mere joint stock companies or distributive agencies, with agents in all parts of the world buying in the cheapest market, which means beating down the wages of the producer for the benefit of those with capital to spare to invest in these societies and, like Building Societies, are a very good investment for those better off, but for the poverty-stricken proletariat this co-operation is not only useless, but often used for their exploitation. Our duty, then, is, while always advocating co-operative effort to show these people that their movement, so far as it effects the condition of the people as a whole, has been a failure, and must be so as long as they attempt to plant it down in the midst of a competitive commercial system, and that until usury and monopoly of every description is destroyed there can be no real co-operation that shall benefit the workers, and unless they are prepared to do their duty and assist in this destruction, they, in the times coming, will be swept away as part and parcel of the old system of Society.

Imperial Federation

To Imperialism and Jingoism of every form we, as international Revolutionary Socialists, are bitterly opposed it being entirely in contradistinction to our idea of the brotherhood of man and of the principles of liberty and freedom. This policy is upheld by the capitalists for the purpose of finding markets for their shoddy wares. They are responsible for the wars in which many people are slaughtered or enslaved which are the outcome of this policy. It is not the Tory, Liberal or Radical, but the Capitalists, the Property and Bond holders who are responsible, as let the Soudan, Afghanistan and Burmah testify.

New markets are a necessity of the Capitalist system of production. They must be got in some way, for as soon as the capitalist system ceases to expand, it begins to fall to pieces. The latest move, Imperial Federation, simply means an attempt on the part of the Capitalists of this country to get a monopoly of the trade with the colonies to the exclusion of other countries and that the resources of these colonies shall be used for the defence of the present markets and gaining of new ones in any and every direction, and not only this but that these united forces of the whole shall be used for keeping the workers in bondage to the Capitalists in every part.

Emigration

As socialists, we contend that emigration is no remedy for poverty. We are opposed to the forcing of our fellow workers by their economical condition, to flee from the land of their birth to other countries to escape from removable evils, and which they are sure to find in large or small degree in any country to which they may go; even if they were sure of finding a paradise in a distant land it would be cowardly on their part to go without striking a blow for freedom, leaving their fellow workers in slavery at home.

The Malthusian

Man, unlike animals and plants, does not depend entirely on the nourishment provided by nature, but as he consumes he produces not only an equivalent but a far larger quantity, or we should not have the enormous accumulation of wealth in all civilised nations, more particularly in the more densely populated ones.

The fecundity of individuals, of females especially, is in direct proportion to the intensity of the causes which tend to destroy them, or what amounts to the same thing, inversely in proportion to the causes tending to their preservation, that is, inversely proportional to their well being and improvement.

This apparent paradoxical proposition can be easily proved by the argument that flowers and fruits on which you bestow most care produce fewer seeds as they are more perfected.

Horse, oxen, sheep, pigs, dogs, fowls and other domestic animals of improved breeds are comparatively unfruitful, whence it happens that their price is always high. Hens stop laying when they get too fat.

Children are less numerous in opulent families than in poor ones. Weak, diseased, unhealthy women have generally more children than strong healthy women, especially if the minds of the latter are cultivated.

In this country nine out of ten marriages have children, but in the nobility only eight out of ten. Our Malthusian friends cannot say that this is caused by the check because the end and aim of this class is to accumulate wealth and perpetuate the family name and title.

We Socialists do not recognise any particular part of the wealth produced as being a wage fund, but contend that all wealth is produced by the labourers, and they, and they only, have a right to it. Until this right is recognised and acted upon, and every available means used for the production of wealth, it is rank nonsense to talk about a wage fund, to which they must keep their numbers down.

The aim of the Capitalists is to keep down the numbers of the labour class to their requirements; to have enough for competition in the labour market to keep wages down, but not enough to be a tax on the poor rates or a danger to Capitalism. If the reduction in the number of labourers was too great, and wages rose, i.e.: the cost of production increased, at once new machinery would be invented to supplant manual labour and again reduce the cost of production.

Has a decrease of population ever tended to increase the comfort and happiness of mankind? Let Spain, Turkey, France, Ireland, and even Sutherlandshire, after the Highland clearances, testify!

This Malthusian theory is the first article of the capitalist creed today. The large capitalists swallow up the small ones; joint stock companies swallow up the individual capitalists; there is not room for all. The large landed estates swallow up and consolidate the small ones; there is not room for all. Machinery supersedes manual labour; there is not room for man and machine; man must, or according to Malthus, will be, starved out of existence; there is no need of him; Nature has not provided for him, therefore he must depart.

Lastly, this Malthusian doctrine is the embodiment of capitalism.

The right to labour and live is the principle of Revolutionary Socialism.

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Joseph Lane
An Anti-Statist Communist Manifesto
1887

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