Before answering the inquiry propounded to me, it were well to first define terms. In one sense whoever desires a radical change in our social conditions, who advocates principles at utter variance with those now maintaining, may be said to be a Social Revolutionist; in this sense the Quakers were religious revolutionists. But the accepted meaning of the term does not embrace revolution and evolution as identical words, but ascribes to the former active resistance by overt acts to the powers that be. It is in this sense that the term is here used, and I at once proceed to give some of the chief reasons why I defend such a course and array myself with those who do not make the assertion of principle subordinate to the lines of legality as laid down by their enemies.

1. Historical progress has been along these lines. Civilization consists in the constant modification of past militant direction, and the evils against which we protest are incarnated in institutions. These being fixed, buttressed by laws requiring compulsory acquiescence under penalties, can only be changed by arousing a sentiment sufficient to secure their modification. But however modified, fixity
again results, protest becomes social blasphemy, a barrier is set up against further advance, and reform becomes an uphill effort against established order, which ever tends to repress agitation as dangerous. The question hereupon arises, if established order be not accepted to its logical exclusion of all change, as in Asiatic despotism, how can such sentiment be best aroused?

Established order, being an instituted fixity, excludes reform, and whoever advocates change by that very act becomes an enemy to it. He may seek to be “practical” and compromise by only urging a slight modification, but principle cannot. Every change involved in social progress illustrates the folly fixity for ever-changing human needs; hence discontent gains ground, faith is weakened, until at last, the barriers remaining immovable, that which at first had birth as an idea in the brain of the reformer works down to the muscles of the less theoretical and overt acts result. Power is by its very essence stationary; it deprecates reform as a weakening of its position; hence, in all ages governments tend to arrest social growth. The phrase “wise government” can only be applied to supernatural direction, which does not obtain in state councils. The wisest government is that which but responds readiest to the demand to which its own establishment had given birth, and for this reason will yield only as forced by fear to give something rather than risk losing all. In other words, reform is the expression of progress; government the institution of what time ever determines to be infantile conditions. The one possesses the fluidity of water, ever seeking through the mutuality of (atomic) interests free scope to arrange relations in even flow; the other, the dam erected before its course and against which the rising waters, constantly pressing with increasing momentum, call out repressive measures for safety, before gathering danger leads to sluiceways to relieve immediate fear, said sluiceways being known in history as reforms. As all wisdom comes but by experience, and government not possessing prescience, we might as well predicate wisdom to the dam, and say that the “wise” dam would ever keep
just ahead of the flowing waters; in other words to cease to be what the word "dam" implies.

2. **Active resistance is the essential element of human nature.** Upon the accepted axiom that "self-preservation is the first law of nature" the whole argument might be rested. In nature rights are mights, being the exercise of that which is necessary for self-maintenance; the right of one fish to prey upon another being its might. In social life self-preservation is seen best maintained where rights are regarded as equal. Hence, in demanding certain rights we are but negatively asserting that our equal rights are being abridged. So in resistance to aggression, to curtailment of equal **rights** (to still use that word which is after all but the expression of the necessary conditions of existence), we are but exercising self-assertion, asserting self-preservation within the lines of equal freedom. The demand for reform, like that for rights, is but protest, called out by denial of free scope to mutual action. My right to life is that of free scope to maintain existence, while the social organism determines this to be within the lines of equal freedom.

Hence, the Social Revolutionist, find the plasticity of free contract denied by the fixity of status, to use Spencer's terms, the assertion of the first logically denies regard for the second, which being founded upon law leads us to cry, "Throttle the law!" or compromise for temporary advantage, which is ever incipient suicide. Self-preservation demands active resistance in physical existence to whatever threatens or curtails it; in social life freedom of contract being the essential condition, whatever prevents this directly invades and calls into action all the functions necessary to maintain life. Such resistance is defensive, self-preservative, for the law of equal freedom positing contract as the essential condition of social existence, its limits are defined.

3. **Passive resistance is but a theoretical illusion of "rainbow chasers."** However beautiful in theory it never obtains in practice. Under free conditions, or on some other planet, it might hold good; but under present conditions, as set forth in the first part
of this article, it would either be the passive bleat of the sheep to
the attack of the ravenous world, or prevented from materializing
by appeals to ambition or cupidity from that fount of favors—
Government. We see this illustrated in the “No Rent” movement in
Ireland. The scheme was both well conceived and organized, but
organization ever involves variance, and the Irish were fooled into
looking to an English Parliament for Irish justice, and they have
attained—Balfour! Garrison was a consistent, passive resistant;
but in launching a revolutionary idea Garrison’s brain logically
led to John Brown’s muscles; it was the connection of parent
and offspring. The throwing a cargo of tea into Boston harbor
intensified feeling, and Lexington and Bunker Hill followed.
In Ireland active resistance (it would be but irony to allude to
Russia) has accomplished more than all the eloquence wasted in
Parliament. Gladstone admitted that the Clerkenwell explosion
disestablished the Irish Church. The recent brutal outrage in
Tipperary has called forth a storm of indignation and the armed
constabulary laugh. The judicious present of a good-size bomb,
and fortunately scores of Irishmen now know how to prepare it,
would change that laugh into consternation and fear, and though
scores of them were hurled to sheol it would still be within the
limits of self-preservation. All that parliamentary agitation has
accomplished for Ireland has been because of the aroused thought
owing to the dynamite hints given at London, Liverpool, Glasgow,
etc.

The whole century has been characterized by the discussion
of economic questions, yet that there was a labor question was
gravely denied by statesmen in 1877, and like lightning out of a
clear sky came the lurid glare of the Pittsburg conflagration and
thousands by its light began to study the new problem. In 1886,
an armed attack was made upon workmen in peaceable assembly
at Chicago, and an indignant hand justly resisted, and lo! the
Twentieth Century is here to publish this article. Do you tell me
that in all these acts and countless others the cost was too great
in noble lives, in tears shed and sorrow felt? The Church mourns
its martyrs, yet wish not that they had been more “discreet” and
lived to vegetate in peaceful obscurity. The world over patriot
dead are held in grateful remembrance, yet it is to the “folly” of
their self-sacrifice that we are what we are. Scaffolds have been
erected often, and in all great crises men and women have been
found willing to grace them. is not the whole long career of the
proletariat but the ”Martyrdom of Man” strewn with whitened
bones, cemented with scalding tears welling up from broken
hearts, and stained with the bleeding feet of countless millions?

Events are the true schoolmasters, and smarting under the White
terror which yearly sacrifices its millions the Social Revolutionist
does not hesitate to invoke the Red terror, knowing that here the
words apply that “he who loseth his life shall save it.” But how? By
words of rodomontade? By inviting others to do by simply preach-
ing the gospel of discontent? No; but by deeds. The Social Rev-
olutionist is not moved by revenge nor by mere impulse. When
Alexander II was killed, when Cavendish and Burke were sent to
judgment, when John Brown shot men he had never before met,
the world understood the full significance of each act. When an
occasion arises in this country where the intent is equally appar-
teent, the social problem will against be studied with still greater
interest, though every telegraph pole be made a gallows. With this
end in view our eyes are dry, though others may weep. Thousands
have sighed over the fate of Louis XVII, reared in luxury and silk-
diapered, and she tears over the sorrows and death of his prostitute
mother, but would they rather have had the continuance of the old
régime? Whatever may be the answer vouchsafed to prayer, it has
never taken the guise of Liberty.

For these reasons I, with my comrades, heartily subscribe to the
last words written by Albert R. Parsons, in his letter to me a few
hours before his unforgettable death: “Hail to the Social Revolution!”