

The Labor Party

An address delivered before the Labor Reform League, of Worcester, Mass., at its first public meeting, in Horticultural Hall, Monday evening, Jan. 20, 1868

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1868

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :—

Having met to initiate organized effort in behalf of labor reform, it is proper to explain the reasons which induce our action, and the objects we aim to accomplish. Not intending, therefore, to use the phrase which embodies my speech, so much in a political sense, as a convenient means to fix attention upon the interesting truths which inspire this movement, I shall occupy the hour you kindly loan me, with an address on the labor party, its principles, its members, and its methods.—what we want, whom it concerns, and how to get it.

I shall assume, at the outset of the discussion, what no one will deny, that labor is entitled to its earnings; and that it is the duty, both of individuals and society, obeying a divine admonition, to render unto all men and women according to their works. Let us also bear in mind that class rule, the centralizing of political or financial power in the hands of few, to the injury of the many, is wrong; and that law, like religion, should cover with the shield of its protection the whole people, especially defenceless workers. It is the violation of these simple, self-evident truths, which provokes the widespread, profound, and ominous agitation, called the labor movement. To attribute it to the eight-hour impudence of trades unions, or the harangues of vagabond lecturers, is no adequate explanation of the phenomena. As well say that astronomers cause an eclipse, or geologists are responsible for earthquakes. Labor reform does not fall from the sky, or spring out of the ground; it comes out of violated rights and interests, out of an almost universal dissatisfaction, of the producing classes, with the hard lot, which legislation and custom, have assigned them. When service, the chief if not the only virtue which comes out of man, is in such disrepute, that a majority of laborers, in all nations, are poor enough to be ranked as “the lower classes,” while the fortunate possessors of others’ earnings rank as “upper classes” in society, it is Yankee-like, at least to guess, that society is wrong side up, and needs to be turned over. An old fable says that giants are under Vesuvius, who, by turning over, shake the mountain in volcanic action. So these lower classes, the giant underlings, beneath the social volcano, called “good society,” by their tossing and turning startle the upperlings, and forebode eruptions of hot wrath, unless reason is listened to.

Some think capitalists came from the head of the Creator and laborers from his feet; that the degradation of the masses is necessary, the result of idleness, incapacity, vice. But who say

so? It is dainty “believers,” who in silks and broadcloth, behind a sleek span, ride in gorgeous splendor to church, in the name of Jesus, who went barefoot—it is the congressman who votes himself \$5000, for working four hours at Washington, and makes \$100,000 yearly by driving his operatives twelve hours a day on stinted wages at home—it is the banker, who, from the midst of accumulated millions he never earned, writes tracts to show that a national debt is a “national blessing”—it is the merchant, who piles high his fortune, while the girls and women who made the fabrics he sells, in factories, in garrets, in cellars, toil ten, twelve, fifteen, eighteen hours a day, to maintain even a wretched existence. Nothing so reveals the impiety of the privileged classes, as that they can rest easy, can behold the injustice of society, without impatience to correct it. In this goodly land, abounding with natural resources, multitudes, anxious to work, are actually suffering for food, fuel and clothing. Surely it is not ordained by the Equal Father of all, who is not willing any should perish, nor approved by human nature, everywhere yearning to better its conditions. It is therefore not a “necessity” to be acquiesced in, but a crime to be denounced. And since there cannot be an effect without a cause, nor a sin without a sinner, be it our duty to track the evil to its source, and arraign the guilty actors and customs at the bar of an aroused public opinion.

But the theory of natural idleness is not sustained by facts. Life itself is lively. If you want an example of perpetual motion, look at the activity of a healthy child, so incessantly in striving to do something, that all a mother’s wits cannot direct and control its energies. A dozen boys come to my door to shovel away the snow where I can give one the job. A girl under twelve years often does the work of a whole family, is wife, mother, daughter, sister, all in one, to help a hard-working father. It is a cruel falsehood to say she prefers vice to working for a living. Society asks “where did she get her clothes?” Where did the rose get its sweetness, the lily its beauty, gold its fineness? Think how many times the old dress has been turned, inside out and upside down, before it floats along the street, informed with such exquisite grace that handsome men look ugly in comparison! It is not Miss Hosmer, or Miss Stebbins, or Vina Ream, who has achieved most, among women, in American art; it is the working girl whose skilled labor makes a new dress out of an old one. Idle! she is the only person yet found, who can work for nothing and find herself.

As to vice the working classes have their share, which however gets well exposed for want of money and good clothes to cover it up. Well dressed vice is not so much objected to. Society arrests you, not for the sin, but for getting found out. It is the unsuccessful rogues who get locked up. Wear good clothes, sin in a large, fashionable way, and you are a “gentleman of property and standing.” But whence come rogues and paupers? They are an article of manufacture; there is no kind of business of such incessant activity as the making of rogues and paupers—that never slacks up. Bad laws and customs generate them. The same spirit, which made men slaves by law in South Carolina, makes them criminals and paupers, by legislation in Massachusetts. The laws are so framed that one-tenth of the people live in vicious indolence, on others’ earnings, while nine-tenths toil incessantly for a scanty subsistence, and many are forced to the humiliation of accepting charity from supplies their own hands produced!

Labor reform is a protest against these savage and needless conditions; it is a loud outcry of somebody hurt; it is a struggle for liberty, equity, fraternity; a revolt against class rule, against the sentence of degradation, which titled classes, in all ages, have affixed on the masses of mankind. Coming from cities and manufacturing districts, where the sway of capital is most oppressive, and impoverishing, the short time banner naturally leads the column of resistance. When we reflect that the average life of New England factory girls is but four years, about the same as that

of girls in houses of ill-fame; that the average life of mechanics is twenty-one years less than that of the privileged classes; that one-half the deaths in our factory districts are of consumption, the result of over-work in hot, dusty rooms; that long hours go with short pay, ignorance and low moral condition, it is evident that no mere desire to escape work, or thirst for dissolute leisure, but grave considerations of health, morals, culture and competence require an adoption of the eight-hour rule.

Again, we want fair pay. No truth is more self-evident, than that what one produces with his or her own hand, or brain, is his or hers against the world. And yet no truth is more generally or persistently denied in practice. The workers create wealth, the shirkers enjoy it. The hardest and most repulsive service is usually paid the least, while the largest fortunes are often held by those who actually produce little or nothing. A public house in England has a sign called the "Six Alls;" at the top stands the king, in his robes of state, who says "I rule all;" on the right hand, one above the other, stands a lawyer and physician; the lawyer says "I plead for all," the physician says "I cure all;" on the left a minister and soldier; the minister says "I pray for all," the soldier says "I fight for all." Underneath these five alls, in coarse garments, weary, worn and dejected, stands the workingman, who says "I pay for all!" It is a fair picture, not only of British justice, but of New England equality and brotherhood, excepting it lacks the sisterhood. Far down below the workingmen, wrestling against ignorance, poverty, disease, and shame, are the working girls and women. Recently, in New York, a poor woman was given materials for an infant's cape,—white Marseilles, to be elaborately worked with cotton. It took fourteen days to complete it, for which she was paid four dollars; the materials cost seven dollars, making the whole cost eleven dollars; the cape sold for seventy dollars, of which the woman got twenty-eight and four-sevenths cents a day for her work, and the merchant fifty-nine dollars for passing it over his counter! Mrs. Boone, a lady well known in temperance circles, a few weeks ago, in the same city, attempted to poison herself and five beautiful children to escape more painful death by starvation! You will agree with me, that a "state" of society which allows such things to occur, quite as seriously needs reconstruction as some States farther south.

We also want honest trade. An Eastern sage expressed the whole of human duty in one word, "Reciprocity," or, in christian phrase "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." So the chief demand of labor is reciprocity,—opportunity to create, and a free, and equitable exchange of products, the world over. But now armies of middle men encamp between producers and consumers, to plunder them both. These splendid blocks of stores on Main street are thought to be "evidences of the prosperity of the city; they rather show the cost of exchange"—how much more trade gets for selling than labor gets for creating.

Of the \$17 we pay for a barrel of flour, the Illinois farmer gets seven or eight. Tea, which costs, duties paid, thirty cents a pound on Long Wharf, retails here for \$1.00 or \$1.25. A sewing machine which costs \$15 at Bridgport, retails for \$60. Lace which girls in Brussels work themselves blind in making, pays many hundred per cent. before it reaches the wearer. I quote these facts not in criticism of traders as a class, who are as good as the average of men, but to illustrate a species of piracy common under the fair-seeming phrase "a thing is worth what it will bring." A capitalist, worth \$1,000,000 tumbles into the dock, he cannot swim, I can and plunge in, but float around him until, coming up for the last time and about to sink forever. he agrees to pay me \$950,000 to save his life. Would any court of law sustain me in enforcing the agreement? Of course not. Yet it is as just and honorable as four-fifths of the "bargains," by which fortunes are made in trade. "Waiting for a rise," as the phrase is, means simply waiting until the starving or freezing

consumer will pay his last dollar, to escape a more cruel death than the drowning capitalist would have suffered. Indeed the case to be parallel requires that I should previously arrange to hustle him into the dock in order to compel him to pay me \$950.000 for saving him. The business maxim "Buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market," is only a strategic way of saying "hustle both producer and consumer into ingulfing circumstances which will compel them to sink, or come to our terms." Or, as John Ruskin says, "Robbing the poor because he is poor, is especially the mercantile form of theft." For all his labor and risk in exchange, the merchant should be well paid. What he gets above that belongs to the producer or consumer.

I know it is replied to all this that capital exercises no real tyranny or extortion, because labor is free to accept or reject the terms offered. But labor is not free; it drags a little longer chain than of old, but is as really chained by conditions and circumstances, most of which capital has the creating and control of. Controlling land, machinery, steam, waterfalls, ships, railways, public opinion, and especially money, capital is master of the situation, can bide its time, and starve labor into submission. The fact is so clearly apparent to intelligent and unbiased observers, that argument would be superfluous, were there not eminent men who gravely assert that there is no tyranny of capital in America! Strikes are in progress everywhere, yet the newspapers quietly acquiesce, because it is capital striking *down* wages,—necessary in most cases I doubt not. But if labor, obedient to a sterner necessity, to gain an extra crust, for famishing ones at home, demands more pay, the air swarms with "strike," "dictation," "force," "riot," "insurrection," and so many other epithets of rebuke flying about, that one would think himself among slave-pens, whips, and plantation overseers, did not the equal sky of New England cover him. The lash is indeed out of fashion; but ghastly spectres of want gathering around the laborer's hearthstone, are surer means of coercion! For a servant girl to ask what amount of work, and what number of hours daily are required, is thought an impertinence; and yet is she not a party in the contract? The argument for eight hours is unanswered and unanswerable; both republicans and democrats—somewhat under a pressing need of votes, perhaps—but both the great parties in different localities have indorsed it, and the legislators of three States decreed it to be law. Yet capital derides the public sense of right, defies the State House, and treads your law under foot. Why? Because capital dictates, and workingmen, though politically free are practically slaves. The law of supply and demand, one with the movements of the sea, the air, and the sunlight, would regulate all, were it allowed unrestricted play; but privileged avarice pre-empt the whole domain of natural resource, and, between the upper and nether millstones of a monopoly of money, and a monopoly of land, grinds the masses into whatever grist its special demands require. In saying this I do not blame capitalists as such, for we all desire to shake off the wages regime, and be master of our own destiny. I freely acknowledge our indebtedness to capital; many facts in this speech were gleaned from libraries erected for public use by private munificence. There is no natural conflict between capital and labor; rightly directed their co-operative energies will keep step, to the music of a divine and redeeming harmony. But under present laws and customs, there is chronic war between hostile interests, of which strikes are the outbreaking evidence. Capital gets the lion's share, and the lion and lamb lie down together, in peace, only when "the lamb is inside the lion." To secure a truly prosperous alliance, calling no man master, we must wed the two conflicting interests, in friendly and impartial co-operation, which is the right of labor and the duty of capitalists. Indeed the pecuniary success of any industrial enterprise, is in exact mathematical ratio to the participation of labor in the profits thereof.

But co-operation, under the best management, will not generally succeed, without a radical change in the laws affecting industry and finance. Government, now, is not a genial influence, falling, like the dews of heaven, beneficently upon all; but a north-east wind, drifting property into a few aristocratic heaps, at the expense of, altogether too much democratic bare ground. Of course working men are not knocked down on the highway and robbed; their fists are too hard and heavy to be successfully assailed in that way. But, through cunning legislation, petty thefts are made illegal, while privileged classes are allowed to steal largely according to law. The cotton interest, the woolen interest, the iron interest, the whiskey interest, every interest excepting labor, capital takes care shall crowd the anterooms of legislation with its committees, to see that the laws are so framed as to favor them. It is called the lobby, the third house at Washington, whose chief arguments are greenbacks—a most convincing kind of logic for legislators. How does government defraud labor? By indirect taxation, a device to throw the public burdens mainly on consumers, so that a poor man with a family of eight often pays fourfold more taxes than a rich man with a family of two. By this game capital gets two dollars, government one, and both unite to take three out of labor. For instance, in 1865 we paid, in round numbers, \$46,000,000 in gold, for brown sugar at wholesale, over and above the cost to importers; of that \$17,000,000 went to government and \$29,000,000 to monopolists and speculators. Alpacca, which costs in England fourteen cents, sells here for sixty-five; government gets twelve, middle-men thirty-nine. Thread is sold for ten cents a spool, instead of four, as when there was no tariff on it; of the six cents added, government gets but a trifle, while one company, at Willimantic, Conn., made out of its share, a million of dollars, in three years, and built a new factory, one hundred feet long besides—all of which the sewing women of the nation paid.

But passing by tariffs, gigantic land monopolies, and other direct and indirect favors which government grants to capital, in personal and incorporated forms, we come to a more serious invasion of the common welfare, through unsound currency, and high rates of interest. Of all the means for plundering the working classes, that of false money is the most effectual. All the stealings of all the thieves, in a generation, do not equal what is thus taken from labor in one day. In the picture of the “Six Alls,” the working man was at the bottom; but above the other classes sits a power which rules the whole; it is king of kings, presides over presidents, is master of majorities and armies—that power is money. Under the old slave system one fibre of cotton proved a sceptre more despotic than was ever wielded by Napoleon, or Cæsar. Why? Because it represented \$2,000,000,000 of property in slaves. We scotched the snake but did not kill him; for the old pro-slavery satan beaten at the South crept into anti-slavery clothes, came up to Wall street, and, as of old in the garden of Eden, “Squat like a toad close at the ear of Eve,” pouring his seductive schemes into the unsuspecting ear of Salmon P. Chase, won the treasury to his devilish service, and, through bank monopolies, and \$2,500,000,000 of untaxed bonds, again rules the land.

If an honest representative of value, money will always be the servant, but never the master, or spoliator of the working classes; for, as Adam Smith said, “Labor was the first price, the original purchase-money, paid for all things, and the ultimate and real standard, by which their values can be estimated and compared.” Whenever, therefore, currency depreciates, or becomes a false exponent of value, all workers are defrauded. For instance, between 1861, and 1865, the price of butter in New York, with nearly the same relative supply and demand, varied from twenty-two to sixty-three cents per pound; of fish, from three and a half to nine; of leather, from ten and a half to forty-two. Since wages rose in far less proportion, labor suffered immense loss by the fluctuation. But to make the fraud more apparent, take a case. from the war, which capitalists

pledged “the last dollar and the last man to put through. A soldier’s wages are \$13 a month; gold goes up to 250, he gets forty cents on a dollar, that is \$5.20 a month. By careful saving he gathers a small amount, to buy a roof to cover his wife and babes; pays 7 3–10 interest on what money he borrows, in addition, to swing the property, and is taxed on the whole, including the debt. He loses a leg in battle, is brought home; taxes and interest soon take his house, wife goes out to service, children are quartered with poor relations, and the soldier grinds a hand organ upon the sidewalk! That is the labor side of patriotism, where “the last man” went to. A capitalist rises in his town hall, proves it the religious duty of all his poor relations to enlist, goes home and invests \$10,000 gold in “five-twenties,” at forty cents, which amount to \$25,000 in currency; draws and reinvests his interest, uses his bonds as basis for bank stock, making double interest. thereby, the whole amounting in four years to more than \$45,000, but call it that. He has, without adding a dollar to production, or risking a hair of his head, made \$35,000 on his gold, escaped taxation, voted against the equalization of bounties, and now calls us faith-breakers, and repudiators if we will not pay him \$45,000 in gold for what originally cost him but \$10,000! That is the capitalist side of patriotism, where the “last dollar” went to. We also would maintain the national faith inviolate, pay the bondholder every cent justly due him; but to those who were defrauded, in proportion as he was enriched,—to the soldiers and workingmen, the national faith must also be kept.

So much for swindling currency. Turn now to high rates of interest. We pay over \$130,000,000 interest annually on the war debt, and they propose to postpone its payment one, two or three generations. At present rates, it doubles in about nine years, but call it ten. and the debt \$2,500,000,000; in ten years it will be \$5,000,000,000; in twenty, \$10,000,000,000; in thirty, \$20,000,000,000; in forty, \$40,000,000,000; in fifty, \$80,000,000,000; in sixty, \$160,000,000,000; in seventy, \$320,000,000,000; in eighty, \$640,000,000,000; in ninety, \$1,280,000,000,000; in one hundred, \$2,560,000,000,000. That is, postponing its payment one generation, we should pay the whole debt eight times over; two generations, sixty times over; three and one-third generations, one thousand times over, or one hundred and sixty times the amount of the whole property of the nation in 1860! That is the way interest devours your substance. But this is a broader and deeper question than that of the war debt. It goes to the bottom of all existing systems of finance, and will institute a new currency based upon, and responsible to labor. We have all noticed how wealth flows to cities—flows from the centres of production, to the centres of distribution and speculation. Boston drains New England, Chicago the west, New Orleans the Mississippi valley, New York the whole. Boston owns nearly half of Massachusetts. Three per cent. of the American people own more property than the other ninety-seven per cent.—a few, chiefly non-producers, immensely rich, while the great mass are always at work and always poor! Why is this? It is mainly the result of the centralizing influence of money, under the sanction of class laws. In no other country of the world, is wealth passing so rapidly into the hands of the few, as in these states to-day. The nature and amount of money, and rates of interest, are controlled in favor of speculation, rather than of production and legitimate distribution. By giving “money legal power to crush labor and property, but labor no legal power over money,” government divides on an average three-fourths of the products of toil to capital, and one quarter to labor. The rate of interest determines the value of money, of rents, and what portion of commodities shall go to capital, and what to labor—the value of property and labor decreasing in proportion as the rates of interest increase. Hence it is as impossible for labor, under present systems of finance, to withstand the aggressions of capital, as to turn back the plunging torrent of Niagara. The net

annual income of the American people, during the last twenty years, reckoning the earnings of all from "old age with its knitting, to the little feet toddling to bring chips from the wood pile," is not over three per cent.—probably much less after deducting the enormous waste in the war, and bringing down present fictitious estimates to the level of actual value. Yet the income of bare money, which needs no food, no fuel, no clothing, has been from six to twenty-five per cent.! It is only a question of time therefore, how soon we must all come under the golden heel of Wall street. Even at six per cent., we double capital, in the hands of its holders, every eleven years, at the expense of labor. The American people earn, on an average, \$112 each annually; of the result two men in this city. last year, reported incomes amounting to over \$300,000, while many of their operatives have not wherewith to buy the commonest necessaries of life.

Universal suffrage is urged as a cure; but working men have voted in Massachusetts for two hundred years, and where are you now? In France every man votes, yet they have no liberty. English people, breaking into Parliament, will achieve no permanent elevation of the masses, unless financially, they reconstruct John Bull from heel to crown. Free trade is proposed, and that system in the main I assent to, if they will make the basis of things honest to start with; but trade itself is a species of piracy until money and exchange are true to labor. New York has an anti-gambling society with Horace Greely as president; the gamblers feeling hurt, have replied by organizing a society to defend their "business." They say, "We bet on the turn of a card; you bet, that is, stake money, on the rise or fall of commodities, what is the difference, Mr. Greely?" The moral difference is, in degree, not in kind; for, over and above the labor necessary to exchange, in trade, as in gambling, what one makes the other loses—which is the essential evil of the latter. If therefore, under the present regime, Mr. Greely and Jay Cooke are right, John Morrissey is right, and very sensible, in modestly choosing to be known under his native title "gambler," rather than as "congress-man" or "banker." It is no justification to sensible men, to consecrate this evil with the broad mantle of necessity—which like charity, is made to cover a multitude of sins—and conclude that common selfishness, compels us all to be villains together; for all at least should have an equal chance to be selfish. Besides, right was before governments, and will survive them; believing in God within us, and humanity around us, we will overturn, and overturn, until finance shall cease to be the swindle it is, and stand for justice between man and man. A reduction of the hours of service, fair pay, equitable commerce,—or the co-operation of capital with labor in the production and distribution of wealth—direct taxation, honest money and low rates of interest; these I understand to be the leading issues, the animating principles of the labor party. To which I must not omit to add, a free ballot, or as expressed in your resolutions at Mechanics Hall, "governments rightly rest on intelligent consent, as expressed in suffrage, impartial to all classes, irrespective of race, sex, or past conditions."

We will next inquire for the membership of the labor party. That it is no class movement, no vague disquietude of those employed at manual labor, usually termed the working classes, but an enterprise which deeply concerns the rights and interests of the whole people is clearly apparent. In proof of this, many concurring signs of the times could be cited, but one significant utterance from the past seems almost a prophetic foreshadowing of coming events. In a lecture before the Charlestown Lyceum, Oct. 6, 1830, that most eloquent and scholarly of Whigs, Edward Everett, said: "If, as I have endeavored to show, man is a working being, it follows that a working man's party is founded in the principles of our nature. Most parties are artificial in their essence; many are local, temporary and personal. What will our political parties be a hundred years hence? What are they now in nine tenths of the world? Mere nonentities. But the working

man's party, however organized, must subsist, in every civilized country, to the end of time. In other words, its first principles are laid in our nature." Robert Rantoul, Jr., one of the ablest and truest democrats Massachusetts has known, also gave the political tendencies of labor reform an early and emphatic indorsement. Abraham Lincoln, in his first annual message, showed the drift of his clear thought in saying that "capital should not be placed above, or even on an equal footing with labor, in the structure of government; " for while "capital has its rights which are worthy of protection, still labor is superior to capital, and deserves much the higher consideration."

Labor reform is no trick of a few in a corner, no scheme got up, but an inspiration, a destiny, an utterance of the primary wants of man, in behalf of universal interests. The desire of Fourier and Owen, of Ballou and Warren, of intelligent and kindly souls, in all ages, is at last answered, in the uprising of common people, to relieve common wants. In Philadelphia, in Detroit, in Chicago, in New Orleans, in Boston, in the shops and foundries of your own city, I could point you to heads wiser than the most eminent writer's books, to hearts loyal to the sublimest theories, yet resolute enough in practice, to answer their own prayers. In the Middle and Western States, organizations, like this, are springing into life, inspired with enlightened and resolute purpose, that hereafter society, government and public opinion, shall respect the rights of labor. We hold it to be the duty, and for the highest interest of all classes to unite with us in the glorious struggle. Why do I speak in this strain to-night? Bred a farmer, my chief ambition being to own and till a piece of land, and, by the more formidable labor of thought and act, to aid the general welfare, I yet must be a serf, bound to the soil, an itinerant chattel forced to sell myself, by the day, to the highest bidder, or, what is worse, by the chicanery of business, to subsist on others' earnings—this is why, at least, I would be insurgent against the unrighteous power which holds labor in wretched vassalage. In any of the towns which environ this beautiful city, you will find an increasing number of farmers crippled by debt and taxation—their buildings going to decay, their lands neglected for want of capital to work them, their sons fleeing to cities. Why? Because agriculture as a business don't pay; because high rates of interest and fraudulent currency, by an attraction as resistless as gravitation, draw the farmer's earnings into the pocket of the money changer. A man does not own a farm so much as the farm owns him. Manufacturers have carried their heads high, and reported large incomes; but increasing distress, first felt in the factory, has reached the counting-room, and is voiced in public conventions. The embarrassments of merchants, and the stagnation of commerce may be traced to the same disturbing source. If the people are not well employed, and well paid, they cannot buy; and when they have no money to spend trade flags, mills stop, and the banks call it "over-production." It is rather under-production, and imperfect distribution; for the people would gladly buy ten times the amount of goods now in market had they the means to do it.

But there are moral aspects of this question which deeply concern every lover of his kind. Wealth, strong in his princely mansion to-day, may beg a crust at the laborer's door to-morrow. As if to atone for the misfortune of inherited opulence, nature tosses the rich-born boy back to the hod and the hand-cart, while graduates of the spade and the shoe bench go up to the exchange and the senate. Capitalists, therefore, who help labor reform are only helping their own descendants a little further on. It is a Jewish proverb that "he who does not bring his son up to a trade, brings him up to steal;" but many a "Christian" father deliberately trains his son to get a living otherwise than by earning it. On the other hand, the poor suffer for the want of what is thus criminally taken possession of. The young man leaves school full of intelligence and high purpose; but, if he is brave enough to marry a woman, instead of marrying wealth merely, in nine

cases out or ten he must succeed by immoralities of business which his soul abhors, or self, wife, children, all be ground up with the mass to cement marble fronts on Beacon street or Fifth avenue! Young women, thousands of whom, while you sit here, walk the streets of American cities, forced to shame or starvation —mechanics, clerks, students, sewing girls, servants, factory operatives, and even teachers of both sexes, perishing with secret vice, postponing or destroying the best uses of themselves, all for the want of a chance to engage honorably and successfully in the blessed necessity of labor. People suppose getting married depends upon loving each other; not entirely, for though love is an indispensable condition of happy alliance, still heart may beckon to heart, and yet the two be forbidden to be one by the price of flour, the high cost of living, the hard conditions of industry which doom the indigent to a servile life. Philanthropists, vexed with increasing celibacy, will find its causing cause here. Though the costly habits and vices of young men, are quite as preventative of seasonable marriage, as the so called love of dress and display in young women. To give woman a chance and inducement to work, the right to vote, and the right and means to pay her own bills, would greatly aid the solution of marriage difficulties.

Some of the best heads of America have taught the “five points” of Calvinism; but who shall explain the Five Points of New York—the moral pestilence of cities? Who solve the involving fascinations of love—the tragic experience of woman—the degradation of labor—the deadly collision of man with man? In New York it is said there are fifteen hundred professional thieves, without counting the members of the city government; they are organized, have a government, a language, and a religion of their own. The Tribune suggests a vigilance committee; editors, churches, schools, reformers, bibles, tracts, mission societies, prayer meetings, all wrestling against incoming evil, and yet the rogues have the best of it. Account of stock, at the end of each year, shows a balance in favor of roguedom. Perhaps we have not yet learned the use of thieves; every evil, from a civil war to a sore finger, has its moral which warns us not to do so again. If successful takers of others’ earnings occupy high places in church and state, if the basis of finance and business is immoral, I am inclined to think that nature distributes a few hundred small, well persecuted thieves, among many thousand large and successful ones, to show that she does not indorse the “respectable” side of the business. This ambitious village, which we feel larger in calling the city of Worcester, tends the same way as New York, London, Calcutta,—downward. The riots of New York, London, and Bristol, show how entirely cities are at the mercy of the “dangerous classes;” that the proudest monuments of art. culture, and civilization-machinery, cathedrals, newspapers, mansions, libraries, schools of painting, sculpture and science, are undergulfed by a fiery tide of barbarism, which, sure as the belching of Vesuvius, will one day leave cities blackened desolations, unless new principles and methods of order are speedily introduced. I have told you what the plow, the loom, and the anvil think about it; will not the privileged classes, by their wealth, their culture and leisure aid the solution of this momentous problem? Our enterprise is restricted to no special class; the capitalist whose genius and energy make him the natural head of a concern, the honest merchant serving both producer and consumer, the philosopher in his closet, the preacher of truth, poets in ecstasy, sculptors with the chisel, painters with the brush, earthquake reformers, counselors in equity, statesmen enacting justice, girls adorning industry, mothers in birth pang, all are embraced in the great fraternity of workers.

Having considered the principles of the labor party, and its existing and prospective membership, let us now turn to its methods, or the measures and policies by which it aims to reach the desired ends. Trades-unions, eight-hour associations, and co-operative societies are necessary steps towards right, but not its enactment; they are not organized victory, but recruiting agencies,

a marshaling of forces for impending conflict. Efforts at association, from Fourier down, though doing immense service as experiments, have generally failed in practice, because government itself is administered by fraud and violence. Intrenched within the law, controlling the finance of all nations, over-shadowing evil infects the life blood of society, balks humane endeavor, and baffles God. In order, therefore, to lay the axe at the root of the difficulty, we accept the opportune suggestion of the Labor Congress, at Chicago, and prepare for political action. Not that mere voting will bring the millenium, but the sooner we put good sense into the ballot-box, the sooner good government will come out of it. The objection to carrying labor reform into politics, usually comes, either from those whose personal interests will suffer thereby, or from kindly critics, who fear a letting down of the general claim. I profoundly respect the opinions of the latter class, but, as John Wesley said, we must not give up all the good tunes to the devil. Since, through the ballot, we can protest decisively against evil schemes and customs, let us, while aiding moral agitation as the breath of reforming life, use all honorable means to put votes behind our propositions. For thus the idea becomes incarnate in a manifold presence, and those incapable of believing the principle, will respect the numbers intrenched behind it.

Legitimate government resides in abstract justice embodied in legal forms, in the laws of God "until we can make better." The highest office is not to be president, or king, but to be right. The case goes from Congress and Supreme Court, up to the workshop, the field, and the fireside. The government is not at Washington, but under some hat or bonnet you meet on the sidewalk. The deepest thinker rules. If you are an intelligent, true man or woman, look in the glass and you will see the government. Believing in the essential principle of civil liberty, that every man has a right to do what he will, provided he invades not the equal right of every other man to do the same, and aware that government helps reform chiefly by getting out of its way, we ask no special legislation for labor, but simply a guarantee of opportunity and reciprocity. The issue is fair play against monopoly—the masses against the classes. In those memorable words of Lincoln, uttered in the midst of the war, and worthy to be written in letters of gold, upon the dome of the federal capitol, "We are fighting to establish order, and with order liberty; the rights of the conquered shall be sacred and intact as the rights of the conquerors." But with better weapons than he used.

Capital, asserting the right of the strong to oppress the weak, enforces long hours against the consent of operatives unable to resist. We reply by writing on the flag which floats over city hall and capitol, "Eight hours a legal day's work." Not as an arbitrary standard, but as a rule expressing the public sense of right, to be observed in the public service; as an enabling act to assist labor to make fair terms. And wherever a public servant does not face that music, working men should walk him out of office at the next election. In farming, trade, and many other kinds of service, the number of hours cannot be regulated by any general rule; but we wish so to equalize circumstances that laborers, like capitalists can work more or less hours as their best interest requires, and not be the helpless victims of moneyed combinations, as now. Guiding our outward course by inner observation, we aim to assert the will of Providence, that is the greatest good of the greatest number. But many do not fear God so much as they fear their neighbors, will sanction iniquity if it be fashionable, and profitable. In cities and factory districts, the pro-slavery minister would enter his pulpit, and lift his eyes to heaven, as if his call to preach came from that quarter; it did not come from heaven, it came from the cotton mill, from the bank vault, or where his salary came from. A similar coalition of selfish interests now puts forth a spurious gospel; for nine sermons out of ten take the side of capital against labor. Two little girls at school, one a capitalist's daughter, and the other a minister's daughter, were discussing the ways and means

of life; the capitalist's daughter said, "If it wasn't for my father your father would be in the poor house;" the minister's daughter replied, "If it wasn't for my father your father would be in hell." This bargain to run the church for the interest of capital, leaves working people to go through the poor house into hell. We want the law, therefore, as a kind of external conscience, as public opinion to make ecclesiastical and political weather vanes point rightward.

Again capital pockets the whole profits of industry, and leaves labor to beg or starve; thus virtually saying "Your service or your life," for "he takes my life who takes the means of living." We will reply by making the partnership of labor a fundamental condition in all charters to do business in this State. Hackmen and jobbers must give bonds to deal fairly, before Mayor Blake allows them to mount the box and drive through the street. If the rule is good for small offenders, it is good also for large ones, who should also be put on their good behavior. This is not. class legislation, but a guarantee of fair play. We simply say to capital, "Thou shalt not steal." Since property is always surer of protection than liberty, or humanity, we will give every man at least a chance to redeem himself, by enabling him to acquire and control his earnings. For a long time corporations have needed some check of this kind. More than forty years ago, Ex-Governor Lincoln, in a veto message to the Legislature, denounced their "tendency to absorb individual property, and thereby to destroy its future divisibility, and voluntary distribution ... to substitute an humble and dependent tenantry, in place of an independent and high minded yeomanry;" and ultimately to provoke "revolution to restore property to those who had the original right to its enjoyment." I but follow in his steps, and you will not think me rashly radical, when sheltered behind the venerable form of Levi Lincoln. Temporarily checked by his manly protest, and defied by now and then an unterrified democrat, the corporation interest has risen irresistibly into a despotism which threatens to make Massachusetts one great slave plantation, with State street as its headquarters.

But all these measures must look towards the fundamental necessity, sound finance. If we make the basis of things honest, eight-hours, co-operation, impartial suffrage, and other needed reforms, will follow easily and naturally; otherwise they will ultimately fail, for the present administration of affairs is drifting us rapidly towards a great industrial feudalism. We must therefore enlist at once in the financial battle already in progress at Washington. The abolition of tariffs and other indirect taxation, the substitution of greenbacks for the notes of the national banks, the speedy payment of the war debt, every measure should be encouraged to emancipate labor from the odious money oligarchy which deranges and defrauds agriculture, manufactures, commerce, and takes the bread off of millions of tables in these States. The talk about eight hours and co-operation, from those who will not join us in a vigorous assault upon the money despotism, which enforces long hours and poor pay, is a worthless cheat. Every scheme for postponing payment of the debt is a trick to take many times the amount out of labor, in going along, and the whole of it in the end. We will not pay it eight times over, by waiting one generation; sixty times over by waiting two; or one thousand times over, by waiting three and one-third generations. Under the conscription, workingmen went to the field. or were shot. Capital staid at home, coined money out of the public distress, and made the corpses of our brothers stepping-stones to princely fortunes. Allowing capital to take its turn, let us assess the debt upon the whole property of the country and discharge it at once. This may seem a startling proposition, but it is simple, direct, and practicable. Add to the real and personal property of the people. all the government bonds held within the country, and levy a tax upon each owner in proportion to the amount of his actual possessions; upon one worth \$5000, or less, one per cent.; \$10,000, two per cent.;

\$15,000, three per cent.; \$20,000, four per cent., and so on. Excepting the amount due to holders abroad, there would be just as much property in the country as before, a portion of it only having changed hands. It would lift a crushing burden from both labor and capital, and indeed be a great benefit to a majority of the bondholders themselves. Mr. Bennett, of the New York Herald, recently offered to contribute \$100,000 in "five-twenties," towards one grand bond-fire in the Park, to consume the whole. He would make money by the act, for the heavy taxes, inseparable from the continuance of the debt, would disappear, and thus save him in a very short time, more than the amount given to the bond-fire. Suppose you have \$1000 in bonds, and draw eight per cent. interest in currency, or \$80 annual profit; and that your income is \$3000; your taxes incident to the debt cannot be less than ten per cent., amounting to \$300 annually. That is, you make \$80 on your bonds and lose \$300 in taxes; lay up a loss" of \$220 annually! Within five years you would be richer, by investing the whole in the bond-fire. Reasoning in this way, Amasa Walker annihilates Jay Cooke's atrocious fallacy, that "a national debt is a national blessing," by showing that nineteen-twentieths of the bondholders themselves would be greatly benefitted by repudiation of the debt.

But the bondholders should be paid every dollar, legally or morally due them, and working-men bear their share of the burden; for with all its evils, the war rendered incalculable service to labor, in abolishing slavery at the South. Greenbacks, valuable as a means rather than as an end, are not stable and responsible enough for permanent use as money. The will of the people which floats them is too vague and uncertain, too much of a treacherous quicksand, for a reliable basis of finance. Besides "the power to coin money and regulate the value thereof," which the Constitution grants Congress, the power to determine the nature of money, and make it uniform throughout the States, is all that can be safely conceded to government. The right of states, cities, towns, and individuals to issue money, subject only to the common welfare, must never be surrendered. Gold has served the plundering instincts of the stock exchange too well, it is too efficient a weapon in the hands of Rostchchilds and Napoleons, for keeping down the masses. to be longer tolerated as the money of a free and enlightened people. It is high time to discard the methods of European despotism, we have so slavishly, and disastrously copied, and consult the best interests of progressive civilization. Let us have an American currency—perhaps a day's labor will be the unit of reckoning by and by—but the least we can demand, is that money shall represent the visible results of labor; that, at least, two dollars, in real estate, shall be pledged, by mortgage, for every paper dollar issued. The representative value of such money could not depreciate, for double its actual value backing it, is a constant and indestructible guarantee, of the essential element of sound currency, its redeemableness. By making money reliable and plenty, it would check speculation, and settle the interest question; for the creators of value would control its representative, and render large increase of wealth impossible, except by passing through some form of labor. It would settle the land question, because it would bring down rents, make agriculture profitable only to actual tillers of the soil, and render large estates worthless to those who do not work them. The rich men would be those who have earned and saved the most, and not those who have the most adroitly and successfully got possession of others' earnings, as now. The system can be introduced and established without a jar of revolution; for the power to issue money and create all needed banking agencies, being entirely in the hands of the people, piratical brokers, and bank monopolists will simply find themselves flanked out of business.

But this is a question of indescribable magnitude, and like other points I have touched upon, requires a course of lectures rather than these few desultory remarks. For the truth or error

of the views of doctrine and policy here stated, I alone am responsible. They are given as the best contribution I can make to the movement, in the hope that the members of this League will always exercise their inalienable privilege, to judge for themselves what is right. The substitution of greenbacks for the notes of the national banks, I suggest as an entering wedge, which may be driven home at our leisure. Fortunately the money question is thrown to the surface at a time, and in a form, which offer us an opportunity such as Providence rarely gives to any people. Remembering that Wall street is the next Richmond to be captured, let us consent to no settlement of finance, which does not speedily discharge the war debt, and give us a labor currency. It is not well to undertake too much at once, lest our over-loaded gun recoil, and kill at the wrong end. What particular measure to put forward—what combinations are expedient—when to accept the assistance of others going our way—and when to bid all aspirants for power “Come under our banner or be driven from the field”—must be decided by circumstances. But we are agreed in this: that every voter shall leave his old party creed outside the door when he enters this League, and henceforth make the interests of labor paramount to all other considerations in political action. We will listen to no more mere talk, unless there is a man behind it. Working men need to make a formal profession of faith in their cause, need to back their words by their deeds, before they can be counted on in a practical issue. I once heard of a cavalry horse so well trained, that when his master was shot off his back in battle, and the bugle sounded another onset, he wheeled into line and fought riderless with his regiment. The war over he was sold, to jog up and down the streets, in the service of a cartman; a band coming along one day, at the sound of the bugle, he reared, kicked away cart and driver, and galloped off, again to fight with his regiment! So working men, unless allied by religious conviction to the organized movement, may be obedient and serviceable to their principles awhile, but are liable to break and scatter when the old party bugle sounds on election day. This League is formed that we may know who means what he says in talking labor reform, and who will vote against us in the trial hour. Individually weak, united we are irresistible, and may control almost any election, by wise and firm use of the balance of power we already hold between the parties.

This is no scramble for office, but the uprising of men who know their rights and intend to assert them. We welcome, therefore, any opportunity to carry our measures, by aid of either republicans, or democrats, reminding them both, that they better fail on our side than succeed in opposing us. But labor is too large a matter to be permanently corked up in any of the old political bottles; and since both parties are mainly inspired by capital, it will be impossible for either long to administer the advancing tendencies of this movement. That labor has little or no representation now, may be seen, by a glance at any deliberative body, recognized in law. Of the members of the New York Constitutional Convention, for instance, there are reported to be—lawyers, 101; farmers, 17, editors, 9; merchants, 8; bankers, 6; gentlemen, 3; manufacturer, 1; real estate broker, 1. Total capitalist class, 146. Of those usually termed laborers, of which the great mass of the community are composed, 2— 1 builder and 1 stone cutter—one-tenth of the people of New York State represented by 146, and nine-tenths by 2! And this is the body, which assumes to disfranchise women, and fasten, anew, constitutional chains on labor; let working men and women write “Usurpers” over that Convention, and call for a new election. But a party is not made, it grows; gathering into its ranks feeling, conviction, interest, custom, fashion, melting all classes into its will, to become the overruling exponent of a great social purpose. That requires time. Generally the outs will come to us first, for minorities may be reasoned with, while majorities yield only to the force of votes. In pro-slavery times, replying to “All men are created equal,”

“break every yoke, let the oppressed go free,” democrats said, “That is fanaticism.” After 1861, politicians, ministers, and even reformers took so lovingly to the more fashionable sin of war, that, when I quoted “Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed,” “love your enemies,” “overcome evil with good,” republicans said, “That is copper-headism.” Not that either party were incurably bad, though both were bad enough; they simply obeyed the usual instinct of men in power, to deny truth. But that is what no party can afford to do. The democrats denied it to the negro, and went under. I would not take one leaf from the laurels of republicans; to have emancipated a race, is glory enough for any party. I believe in impartial suffrage. But the denial of human rights to get negro rights, is wrong in principle, and mistaken policy. Having coupled suffrage with disfranchisement of large bodies of white men, in Ohio, in Tennessee, and all over the South—with disfranchisement of women everywhere—with military despotism, and the denial of State rights—with assault on the Judicial and Executive Departments of Government—and with ineffable abominations in finance, the republicans must speedily reform, or follow in the wake of other transgressors. They won the government, because on the slave question they were more democratic than the democrats. ‘On State rights, on peace, taxation, finance, suffrage, labor, the democrats are now more republican than the republicans. Joining neither party, and making myself responsible for the errors of neither, I will be free to use either, to advance needed reforms. Through parties, or over parties, wherever truth leads, I will follow, to reach that practical justice, which alone assures liberty, competence, and peace. But understand, once for all, that, if ever redeemed, you must work out your own salvation; that you will continue to be the convenient foot-ball of partizan schemers, until you wake up to an intelligent sense of what is needed, and a combined determination to have it. How often has philanthropy, beholding the masses with yearning solicitude, asked, “Can they be saved?” Used to uphold war, slavery, intemperance—letting your own organs die, yet giving daily aid to newspapers, bribed to silence or falsehood, by monied monopolies—supporting churches which side with wealthy transgressors, and insult those with charity for whom they should demand justice—consuming your physical energies, benumbing your intellect, depraving your moral sense, and worse than wasting your energies in whiskey, tobacco. and dirty beer—working men, wherever you are guilty of such things, you care little to be saved, unless you care deeply and earnestly enough to lop off these hindrances. I know moulders, machinists. coach-makers, carpenters, mechanics of every class, who understand this subject, and are able to discuss it, eloquently and impressively, before large audiences; men who would make the country ring from side to side, would you but give them the scantiest support. But, alas! little ones at home, pulling at their skirts cry for bread, and capital, with all its sins, pays these men better to remain in the shops, than you will pay them to preach the good tidings of labor’s deliverance. Tell me not of hard times; I knew working girls in the war time, so poor that, having nothing to eat, they lived on the recollection of what they used to eat, and yet found time to attend meetings to free slaves at the South, meetings to free slaves in New England, and always gave something to help on the good work. With hands full of invisible wealth, with sinewy muscles, stalwart frames, and hearts gifted with immortal hope, if in earnest, you will find time and means to give, and glory in a chance to spend and be spent to better the common condition.

We aim not at a new deal of old political cards, but at fair dealing with just principles. The good Providence which spoke in the Declaration of Independence, and the abolition of chattel slavery, now struggles through trades-unions, co-operative societies and uprising woman, to achieve a wider and grander emancipation. As of old, redemption came from the bulrushes of the Nile, and

the manger of Bethlehem, as the slave taught us more statesmanship than senates, more religion than pulpits, so now political wisdom comes from mechanics, working girls, and gravel tossers, to whom Wall street and Washington must ere long surrender. Sheltering their sinister designs behind the military renown of Grant, the capitalists, headed by A. T. Stewart, are plotting to control the national election. But the day is past when any man, who ignores both labor and liberty, can preside over these States. It is not A. T. Stewart, but his coachman who is to choose the next President. Capitalists may be allowed to ride where labor drives, but can both ride and drive no longer.

Careful in all our measures and movements to ask, first what is right, let us strive to make the labor party a living embodiment of better things; to be mindful not only of rights but duties; extend labor unions, and co-operative effort in every direction; seek knowledge, temperance, chastity, wealth; and by the utmost accumulation of culture and resource, be worthy of ourselves, and the noble cause it is our privilege to serve. Those to whom war comes for its soldiers, government for its voters, its police and firemen, science for its inventors, reform for its converts, and religion for its believers—the common people, hitherto, have shown their greatest strength, in the terrors of revolution, and the carnage of war. If wise, they will not allow passion and ignorance to continue this barbarous game, and intrude the age of the brute into the age of man. Asking no leveling division of property, but simply opportunity to create and acquire it, no measures to be carried by threats and intimidation, but resolute assertion of right, remembering that every crime helps the enemy, that force and violence are weak and perishable, while truth and fair play conquer alike, in peace and war, in victory and defeat, we shall redeem labor, renovate society, and furnish an example of what the world has not yet seen, a government without a sword; sinking race, sex, caste, nationality, in a common brotherhood, there shall be no foreigners, no natives, no masters, no slaves, no “bosses,” no “hands,” none to command, and none to obey, but one law, one love, one interest, one destiny;—

“The monarch glittering with the pomp of state
Wears the same flesh as those that die of hunger;
Like them the worm shall be his loathsome mate,
When he resigns his glory to a younger.

The beauty worshipped by the limner’s eye,
On whom a hundred suitors gaze admiring,
Is sister to the hag, deformed, awry,
Who gathers in the road her scanty firing.

The scholar glorying in the stamp of mind,
Master of all the wisdom time has hoarded,
Is brother to the lumpish; untaught hind,
Whose vulgar name will perish unrecorded.

Therefore let human sympathies be strong;
Let each man share his welfare with his neighbor;
To the whole race Heaven’s bounteous gifts belong,
None may live idly while his fellows labor.”

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E. H. Heywood
The Labor Party

An address delivered before the Labor Reform League, of Worcester, Mass., at its first public meeting, in Horticultural Hall, Monday evening, Jan. 20, 1868

1868

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