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EDITORIAL.

IN laying before the Socialist public the first number of our new departure, we feel that a few special words are likely to be looked for from the editors.

¶ Now, as we understand the policy of the Socialist League, it aims at education and organisation towards action when the fitting moment arrives.

When that action is set on foot it will have nothing less for its aim than the taking over by the workers of all the means of producing wealth, to be used for the benefit of the community, that is to say, for the benefit of each and all of those who compose it; in other words, the realisation of a new society with equality of condition for its basis. Before we can attain to this it is necessary that the mass of the workers should understand this much at least, that nothing short of this will deliver them from the ills they now groan under, that anything short of this though it may change the number of their masters or their position to each other, though it may take from one group of them to give to another, will leave them under masters still, will still leave them slaves to arbitrary authority.

But it will be said to us: "Do you believe in a sudden leap into this new society, as the result of a consecutive and logical change, with no experiments, no attempt at temporary amelioration of the lives of the workers?"

No; we believe in no such an impossibility: a time of transition there must be, and many will accept the incompletest transition as the realisation of their hopes: experiments there will be, and many will refuse to acknowledge their failure even in the teeth of obvious facts. Attempts at bettering the condition of the workers will be made, which will result in raising one group of them at the expense of another, will create a new middle-class and a new proletariat; but many will think the change the beginning of the millenium. All these things will and must be; the question for us is, what share shall we take in them?

Whatever our share in them may be, we believe that these attempts, this transitional condition, will be chiefly brought about by the middle-class, the owners of capital themselves, partly in ignorant good-will towards the proletariat (as long as they do not understand its claims), partly with the design both conscious and unconscious, of making our civilisation hold out a little longer against the incoming flood of corruption on the one hand and revolution on the other.

We believe that the advanced part of the capitalist class, especially in this country, is drifting, not without a feeling of fear and discomfort, towards State-Socialism of the crudest kind; and a certain school of Socialists are fond of pointing out this tendency with exultation, as presaging the early triumph of the Cause of the People, and are looking forward to the time when we shall be "All Socialists" in the sense that Krapotkine uses the phrase in the chapter under that title in his "Words of a Rebel." Well, we also exult in this change of front of the middle-classes, not because we wish to become All Socialists on these terms, but because it is good that the attempts and failures should be made, the new officialism of the transition period foisted on the world by the dominant class, which has no other function but self-preservation. We rejoice to see Bourgeoisdom digging its own grave amidst the blunders and blind stumbling that Socialists might otherwise be driven into.

But though we rejoice in this and though we admit that it is good that partial changes should take place, since they cannot be final, or the condition of things they bring about be long enduring, what have

we to do with helping them on, save by steadily enunciating our principles?

Can we pretend to push forward some measure which we know is impracticable or useless, loudly crying out on practicality meanwhile? Can we who preach the downfall of hypocrisy make friends with the compromise which we despise? Can we who preach freedom, fetter our souls from the outset by cowardly acquiescence with a majority which we know is wrong? A thousand times no!

Again we are but a few, as all those who stand by principles must be until inevitable necessity forces the world to practise those principles. We are few, and have our own work to do, which no one but ourselves can do, and every atom of intelligence and energy that there is amongst us will be needed for that work; if we use that energy and intelligence for doing work which can be done just as well by men who are encumbered with no principles, we waste it; and we had then better confess ourselves beaten, and hand over our work to others who understand better what a party of principle means. Whatever of good may go with the stumbling, compromising kind of Socialism, let it be done at least by those who *must* do it; do not let us do their work as well as our own. We *must* wait and they must act; let us at least not confuse our ideas of what we are waiting for by putting a false issue before ourselves.

But there is another thing besides Bourgeois stumbling into State Socialism, which shows which way the tide is setting, and that is the instinctive revolutionary attempts which drive them into these courses. What is to be said about these? They are leaderless often, and half blind. But are they fruitful of nothing but suffering to the workers? We think not; for besides the immediate gain which they force from the dominant class as above said, they are a stern education for the workers themselves. And however bitter that education may be, it surely is not so much worse than the periods of quietude they have had to endure; the worst thing that we have to dread, though every day now it is less to be dreaded, is that the oppressed people will learn a dull contentment with their lot, and give their masters no more trouble than may come of their dying inconveniently, and being terrible objects to look at or to speak to while they live: the rudest and most unsuccessful attempts at revolution are better than that, though *that* is what is chiefly aimed at by middle-class social reformers.

With all genuine revolutionary attempts, therefore, we must sympathise, and must at the least express that sympathy, whatever risk its expression may subject us to; and it is little indeed if we can do no more than that.

The *Commonweal*, then, will steadily continue to put forward the principles of International Revolutionary Socialism; will deprecate all meddling with parliamentary methods of "reform." Constitutionalism means the continuance of the present system; how can Socialists, therefore, who aim at abolishing the system, support its support? With all revolutionary movements the *Commonweal* will sympathise as it always has done, and will not accuse the people of rashness for doing what they have been forced to do, or of blindness for making the only protest against their wrongs that they are able to make.

In few words, our function is to educate the people by criticising all attempts at so-called reforms, whose aim is not the realisation of equality of condition, but the hindering of it; and by encouraging the union of the working classes towards Revolution and the abolition of artificial restraints on life. The true aim of the people of this epoch is to learn how to live, and to assert their right to do so in the teeth of all opposition.

WILLIAM MORRIS.
E. BELFORT BAX.