

# THE COMMONWEALTH

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### NOTES ON NEWS.

THE events of the Great Strike, the pushing forward of the lower part of the "lower orders," coming as a sequel to the agitation of the last six years in England, have much impressed the minds of that part of the public which thinks at all. Socialism, once a mere word to them, then a foolish fad, then a bugbear, bearing with it confusion and violence and nothing else, is at last presenting itself to them as a possible change in society which their own eyes may see, and which will perhaps be bearable to them.

Good so far. But what do they mean by Socialism, these well-to-do people who are beginning to think that it is coming and that it will suit them pretty well (as indeed it will, but scarcely in the way they think)? Doubtless if questioned on the point as to what they expect from Socialism, they will answer with a phrase or two like this from the *Pall Mall Gazette*: "From the point of view of political economy, Socialism means the collective instead of the individual administration of capital, rent, and interest."

Yes, yes; but what does the "collective administration of capital, rent, and interest" mean? I suspect to the *Pall Mall* writer, nothing at all; and that when he comes to find out that it means the abolition of private property, he will cry off his Socialism—if he can.

In fact, his jubilant satisfaction, shared no doubt by many of the cultured classes, at the aspect of things at present, rather shows what a very limited idea he has of the coming new society. He echoes Sir William Harcourt's humbug, "We are all Socialists now!" Are we indeed? Well, I must say in that case we need not have taken the trouble to become Socialists; since the days are still so hard on the workers that it is considered a great victory for them when the hardest worked people in London can screw a very minute gain out of their masters, who are still living in luxury earned by the employment of doing nothing; while the slums in all our big cities are just as bad as they were ten years ago, and there is no prospect of their being bettered perceptibly by our present masters in the next ten years. We may be preparing the kingdom of heaven on earth, but I think I can bring many credible witnesses to prove to the most sanguine that it has not reached them yet.

Again, if we are all Socialists now, how does it come that we of the well-off are not holding mass meetings, and appointing committees to look into the best method of relinquishing our privilege in favour of the disinherited? Surely if we have acknowledged the tremendous truths which modern Socialism has laid open to us, we ought to be busy acting on them, unless we are prepared to brand ourselves as the feeblest curs yet told of in history.

Our *Pall Mall* friend quotes Sidney Webb to show that we are all Socialists in his well-known platitude about the individualist City Counsellor enjoying the advantages of Socialism without knowing it, and miscalling Socialism all the time. Of course our Fabian friend knew very well what a piece of claptrap he was putting forward, and that what the City Counsellor was really saying went rather in this way: "Ha, ha! So these damned fools think that all this municipal business is Socialism—what fun! And they wonder that I am pretty well satisfied with such Socialism, as I really think I ought to be, when they work to provide me with these fine things, and I enjoy them without working. Hurrah for Socialism of this kind, say I; so long as the word contents them!"

What is the real gate which will pull up these soft Socialists, who so long as they are allowed to steal the goose will not object to give the giblets to the poor? This is the barrier which they will not be able to pass, so long as they are in their present minds, the *acknowledgment of the class war*. The "Socialists" of this kind are blind as to the essence of modern society. They hope for a revolution, which

is not *the* Revolution, but a revolution which is to ignore the facts that have led up to it and will bring it about.

It is strange that they are so blind! Granted, as they must grant, the existence of a class which consumes without producing, and which, instead of being treated as a criminal class that has forfeited its rights of citizenship, is the master of the producing class, and has arranged all its law, religion, and morality to fit in with the theory of the beneficent eternity of privilege,—granted all this, how far can the class which supports these criminals, these violent robbers, go, without knocking up against the laws, the religion, the morality of robbery? Surely not a step. "Let us rob you a little less," say these Constitutionalists, "and then be contented. Or, at least, you who are most discontented, let us shuffle off some of your burdens on to another group of the disinherited, and then at least *you* can be contented."

It won't do! When one man employs another, and as a consequence of the "employment" takes from him a large part of what he produces, what is the use of telling him to go to a third person to recover the wealth he has been diddled out of? His resource is obvious and at hand in the form of the robber's purse, and nothing else can compensate him.

It is most important that young Socialists should have this fact of the class-war always before them. It explains past history, and in the present gives us the only solid hope for the future. And it must be understood that it is only by the due working out of this class-war to its end, *the abolition of classes*, that Socialism can come about. Suppose the whole of the middle-classes agreed on the necessity of Socialism, how are they going to realise it unless it is demanded by the workers?

Give up their privilege, as above said, you may say. Yes, but they live on that privilege, and if they attempt to give it up without the world of labour being prepared to receive them as workers, they simply throw everything into confusion by competing with the workers for the employment of the world-market, which exists only as a machine for keeping capitalism going. It is the workers only, enlightened as to the class-war, and therefore no longer carrying it on blindly, as they have hitherto done, who must make the machinery of free labour and mutual exchange, which will supplant the machinery of capitalist commerce, and at one stroke both *compel* the resignation of privilege and make it possible.

Deduction: the worker cannot better himself at his own expense but only at the expense of his master, who for his part, driven by competition, cannot help striving against the attempts of the worker to better himself. These two, therefore, are necessarily enemies, and to blink that fact does not render them less so, but only gives a little longer day to the enemy of the workman. *Therefore* it is that the middle-class semi-Socialists, driven by class instinct, preach revolution without the class struggle; which is an absurdity and an impossibility.

W. M.

### THE INTEGRAL CO-OPERATORS:

AN ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH THE CO-OPERATIVE  
COMMONWEALTH.

DEAR READERS,—We feel that you, in common with ourselves, have hoped to some day see evolved a truly natural, equitable and scientific educational, industrial and social system, wherein all public utilities should be free, and every article of personal consumption at cost; wherein there should be freedom from taxation, usury, and rent; wherein constant employment, and the enjoyment of the full product of his labour, should be secured to every member; wherein emulation should be encouraged, but competition should not be allowed; speculation and monopoly be impossible; ignorance and bigotry without a