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Jules Guesde Papers



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GU 6/1/4

... will do  
... working classes in  
... something about the state  
... to be.

There was no socialism in England except  
of the Old Chartist movement and of the  
so-called Communism blended with a reflexion from  
Socialism. The Middle-classes triumphant in  
all commercial successes were ignorant of any discontent  
amongst the workers; Liberalism or Whiggery was  
where victorious and seemed to many the furthest pro-  
goal to be arrived at.

This is changed; Socialism is becoming a hope to the  
workers, and a fear to the Middle-classes. Although indeed  
many will talk about it as much as you please, and  
a few of them are prepared to declare themselves Socialists  
they are not compelled to recognize the great fact of the  
class-war. A sort of conscience is waking up amongst  
these persons, stimulated by the extreme hideousness and  
obviousness of poverty in England. All kinds of schemes  
for the qualification of the lot of the workman are set on  
foot by them: state-aided emigration to get rid of the in-  
conveniently many; feeble attempts at turning back the hands  
of the clock by establishing peasant proprietorship, or village  
industries; insurance of workers à la Bismark; the slightly  
improved form of joint-stockery called cooperation, ~~and~~ <sup>many</sup> things  
down to mere philanthropy and the preaching of Malthusianism  
and Thrift are tried in turn by these bourgeois beginning to  
be conscious of the volcano on which their society rests.

It is true that in England up till quite lately the  
movement has been confined to mainly an intellectual one;  
though it has not been confined to those whom we call



I have but now attended to  
 the subject, and I admit, that we are  
 intellectual socialist. But this is now changing.  
 The revolution of the last decade has made the work  
 of the revolution ~~of~~ on those who have most  
 to gain much easier, and the class struggle  
 with other countries is becoming clear to the  
 masses, and they are learning to connect their miserable  
 condition of their lives with their position as part of the  
 process of Capitalistic production; they are feeling the  
 need towards a change in the basis of society, and there  
 are many signs that this is the case. E.g. from the  
 fact we have used street corner preaching as a means of  
 propaganda, and it forms a large part of our work.  
 A few years ago, say even 3 or 4 years ago there were  
 places where our speakers were liable to interruption  
 from working men themselves; whereas today the audience  
 sits quietly, and are generally in accord with what our  
 speakers say. Again in the London radical clubs it is  
 almost impossible to get opposition for our speakers, where  
 once they were scarcely listened to. And I say confidently  
 that whatever political <sup>life</sup> action there is in those clubs  
 (I am not thinking of the wire pulling at election times)  
 rests with those of their members who are declared Socialists.

The main difficulty that meets us is the apathy of  
 the men of the more consolidated trades; England having  
 been the first country that fell completely under the influence  
 of the Great Industries; the men in the great manufacturing  
 towns have been drilled for generations into dependence  
 into looking upon themselves as ~~this~~ a part of the factory,  
 and their employer as a paymaster with whom they <sup>may</sup> ~~might~~  
 wrangle at times, but who ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> necessary to their livelihood.  
 On the other hand we have some of the opposition in feeling  
 between the peasant and the town. ~~between~~ <sup>some</sup> workman which  
 exists in France and other Continental Countries





...of the ... with  
... but form of compulsion,  
... of the farmers are by no  
... they may be forced to vote Conservative  
... inflammable material.

... primary <sup>out</sup> politics has favoured our cause  
... the Irish affair (in which by the way all  
... at home have ~~shown~~ <sup>large part</sup> heartily) has quite broken  
... the old parties; so that the workers, who once trusted  
... in parliament for dealing with their grievances,  
... confidence in it; and that the more as the  
... political groups of the Socialist Radicals, (who may  
... to be represented in the press by the London 'Star')  
... ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> Parliament, and ~~will~~ <sup>will</sup> ~~be~~  
... none when the Irish question is solved or shelved.

This we think good, because in our opinion (I speak here  
... the Socialist League) the workers will only waste  
... time and energies by trying to get ~~into~~ their members  
... parliament, so that, I repeat we are far from re-  
... the extreme febleness of the attempts that have  
... been made in this direction.

On the other hand the County Councils (newly established)  
... in the great towns and especially in London are showing  
... signs of ~~the~~ life and a tendency towards ~~the~~ Socialism  
... which were certainly never looked for by ~~the~~ <sup>the Tory party</sup> who  
... brought in the bill which created them; and it may be  
... well hoped that they will form a ~~very~~ rallying point  
... for the people against the Centralizing bureaucratic Parliament  
... which in England is sure to be reactionary up to its last  
... days. For indeed what is that parliament but a  
... Committee defending on behalf of the Capitalists those sacred  
... rights of property which it is the business of Socialists to  
... attack. This Committee is not sorry to have amongst its  
... members of the exploited classes; partly because their presence  
... there acts as a safety valve for discontent; and partly



to that the workers  
 can carry their hopes  
 6/11/14

the condition of the party in England  
 the growth of public opinion's steady  
 the organization of the party is bad; and when  
 has reached a certain point organization will  
 from out of it in such a way as to be irresistible.  
 I should mention that in Australia Socialism  
 is spreading <sup>in a hopeful way</sup> and that there it is not ~~as it~~ be expected a  
 reflection of American Socialism, but is of the English type.  
 For the rest the very fact that <sup>modern</sup> Socialism in England began  
 on the intellectual side gives us special hope that its growth  
 will be steady, and that the idealism which still <sup>forms</sup> ~~remains~~  
 a large part of the movement there is a necessary portion  
 of the general movement. Surely it is dangerous for us to  
 rest our hope on economic fatalism, on the continued and  
 steadily growing decrepitude of the bourgeois power; the  
logical development of production & society no doubt  
 leads us to look for this; but then the historical development  
 may interrupt it and give a new lease of life to the  
 middle-class supremacy. England may yet go through  
 a period of exuberant commercial prosperity; although  
 it may well be, that, owing to the new impetus that  
 will give to the invention <sup>and improvement</sup> of machinery, the workers will  
 not profit by it in the same proportion as they did by  
 the last one. But in any case shall we cease to be  
 Socialists because we are better fed slaves, more prosperous  
 parasites than of old? No, the intellectual movement  
 will save us from that, and will not allow us to be content  
 with anything short of the realization of our ideal. We  
 have learned that what we have to claim is complete equality  
 of condition for all men and that this claim can be made  
 good, and we cannot unlearn the lesson once learned.  
 We know also that however the lot of ~~the~~ some of the



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... that resignation  
... complacency, until  
... of work and life; and that  
... well off ~~and~~ will still  
... of their masters, or at bottom  
... the world market.

The claim of which the English workers are  
... will not stop short will not stop  
... of complete independence and the responsibility  
... which goes with it, in place of a slave's rations and  
... responsibility with it. But there is a danger  
... through a period of blindness and disappointment  
... into a mere political party to be played on  
... political adventurers and dealers in votes for their own  
... which party may think it necessary to feed  
... workers' hopes by agitating for a few palliative measures  
... which the Bourgeois Parliament will only grant them if  
... it believes that they will be ~~effective~~ ineffective, and which  
... if effective, would leave the great mass of the workers  
... free to vote - and to stave.

Two things I wish to claim on behalf of the English  
socialists; first that however they may differ in opinion  
they are (with a very few exceptions) thoroughly inter  
national. They condemn jingoism and Chauvinism to the  
utmost extent; for them the word 'nation' expresses a  
mere geographical ~~and~~ idea; and they have so completely  
shaken off the old prejudices of the Englishman that to  
them the British Empire is not a thing to love or to be  
proud of, but a disgrace and a misnomer, <sup>as a domination</sup> a ~~thing~~ <sup>corn</sup>  
soured of fraud injustice and violence to be <sup>second</sup> attacked  
by all honest men wherever possible.

Again in virtue probably of their idealism English  
socialists have undertaken the guardianship of the  
aesthetic side of Socialism, and have become the inheritors

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...the idea of workers  
 ...labour pleasant  
 ...of course they have not  
 ...schemes for carrying out this  
 ...cannot think unimportant. We  
 ...to get all men to share in  
 ...the accomplishment of our  
 ...will be an enormous blessing for the  
 ...shall we be content when we have reached  
 ...? Surely not, the next step of men who have  
 ...power that they are no longer tor-  
 ...of the fear of starvation will be to abolish the pain  
 ...so that we may as happy as we should be.  
 ...therefore that the English movement in spite  
 ...shortcomings has done good service to the Socialist  
 ...if only by putting before the workers the ideal of  
 ...beautiful and complete life, which will be realized  
 ...with Socialism, but which cannot be realized  
 ...long as the ~~worker~~ workers are in a dependent position.  
 ...remains to be said that a great deal of literature  
 ...come out of the Socialist movement in England.  
 ...several labour sheets we have two weekly papers  
 ...Justice representing the Social Democratic Federation, and  
 ...the Commonwealth representing the Socialist League: we  
 ...also publish many pamphlets and leaflets (specimens of  
 ...which are laid on the table) and larger works on  
 ...Socialism are not ~~want~~ lacking. Besides which it  
 ...maybe mentioned as a sign of the times that it has  
 ...become a sort of fashion amongst our modern novel  
 ...writers to spice their books, so to say, with a certain  
 ...amount of Socialism.

Socialism then is ~~a~~ in England a plant healthy  
 and of steady growth though it is young, and its blossoms  
 and fruit are long delayed

William Morris



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Morris

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