

Roosevelt's Stale and Silly Objections:
An Answer to the Articles in *The Outlook*
(May 1, 1909)

The two articles by Theodore Roosevelt in *The Outlook* — “Where We Can Not Work with Socialists”¹ and “Where We Can Work with Socialists”² — have attracted wide attention. The articles are timely and attest the rapidly increasing importance of socialism in the United States. It is no longer a fantastic dream to be ridiculed, but a grim menace to excite alarm, and if what Mr. Roosevelt here writes of socialism is true, or but half true, all good citizens should unite in stamping it out; and it seems not a little strange, to put it mildly, that Mr. Roosevelt, who condemns socialism as an unmitigated evil and socialists as moral degenerates, still feels moved to work with socialists under any circumstances whatsoever.

But what Mr. Roosevelt has written is not true, nor half true, and so palpably evident is this that intelligent critics and fair opponents of socialism are abashed and conclude with Prof. Albion W. Small,³ head of the department of economics of Chicago University, that Mr. Roosevelt “slopped over” and that such an unwarranted tirade has a tendency to discredit all objection to socialism, thereby promoting instead of checking the advance of the socialist movement.

Stale and Silly Objections

With but a single exception Mr. Roosevelt repeats all the stale and silly objections to socialism which have been parroted by capitalist apologists and retainers during the past twenty years. With this included his re-hash would have been complete. How or why did he happen to overlook the twin to his “free love” bogey — that socialism proposes to “divide up” the wealth of the nation? Strange that this deadly count should have been omitted from the indictment. Perhaps he realized that it had been over-worked and was suffering from nervous exhaustion. But the same is true of his entire category of criticism, from the false and malicious assumption that socialists hold “that all wealth is produced by manual workers” to the frenzied climax that they aim at “the annihilation of the family, and ultimately the annihilation of civilization.”

Not a word from any accredited source in support of his sweeping allegations. Not even a fresh falsehood. Only a repetition of the threadbare freaks long ago discarded by reputable critics, garnished with irrelevant commonplaces, and, of course, with hackneyed homilies about the uprightness of the upright and the wickedness of the wicked.

The Socialist Party

The socialist movement is represented by a party which has polled nearly half a million votes in the United States. It has its authorized declaration of principles, its platform, and its program, adopted by the rank and file of the party, in which are clearly set forth the aims and objects of the movement and the means whereby these are to be accomplished. There is no occasion for misunderstanding. Here may be found the expression of the party itself as to what it stands for, and it is certainly a curious and noteworthy fact that it does not stand for a single one of the charges which Mr. Roosevelt brings against it. This of itself would be a sufficient refutation of his tirade, but we propose to follow him step by step through his tortuous windings and convict him beyond doubt of having grossly misrepresented the socialist movement and basely slandered its 3 million or more adherents in the United States.

Why did not Mr. Roosevelt quote a line from the party's platform? Why did he ignore every accredited author and writer except one whom he quoted with characteristic cunning to misrepresent? Why did he not quote a line from the literature of the movement? There are scores of socialist papers and magazines, hundreds of books, and thousands of pamphlets written by party members in the United States, but not a line did Mr. Roosevelt quote from them in support of his unfounded assumptions and allegations.

We are now prepared to understand, if our minds be open and without prejudice, why Mr. Roosevelt found it necessary to single out an individual member of the Socialist Party to make his domestic misfortune the pretext for charging the entire movement with "free love" and with nameless filth and immorality.⁴ Coming from one who with his party and absolute power in Washington for seven years and where during all that time the rankest red-light district and the rottenest pornomania flourished under his very nose, this pure and pious affectation is neither more nor less than sickening and disgusting hypocrisy.

Moral Uprightness of Socialists

Surely it must be regarded as a rare tribute to the moral uprightiness of the 3 million American socialists that only one can be found among them to serve Mr. Roosevelt's dire necessity of a horrible example. But even this lone individual must be denied him. It is true that a slanderous capitalist press has seemingly succeeded in fitting him for that indecent role, but those who know him know that Christ himself was not more cruelly maligned by the Pharisees of his day, and that a purer soul never walked this earth.

What are the facts? Listen, Mr. Roosevelt! The man whose misfortune you seize upon as an excuse to stab socialism in the back, and whom you crucify in public with the malignity of a dragon, was born in poverty and married as a mere boy. In his maturer life, realizing to his unspeakable sorrow that he did not love the woman he wed, he was lawfully separated from her, by mutual consent, and lawfully married the woman he did love. In this he simply did what thousands of your Republican friends have done and for which every decent man honors them, seeing that prostitution is never so vile and shocking to every moral sensibility as when practiced within the marriage relation.

You have never criticized any of your Republican friends for exercising this lawful right and moral duty, and you would never have dreamed of dragging our comrade into the limelight had he also been a Republican instead of a Socialist — and you know it!

But I am not yet through with you, Mr. Roosevelt. The gentleman prepared by your foul and slanderous press to serve as your horrible example because he dared to speak the truth never in all his life tasted liquor or tobacco, never utter a profane word, never polluted his lips with a lie, never played a game of chance, never spoke an unkind word to his family, and never crossed the threshold of a bawdy house. Can you and your intimate associates truthfully say the same?

And yet this is the man you dare to lay wanton hands upon to convict the socialist movement of immorality.

Morality of Rooseveltism

But still another moment. I am not yet through with you. Your principle political preceptor was an eminent Republican. At the very time you sat at his feet and implicitly obeyed his every order he was carrying on a liaison which culminated in a shocking public scandal. This eminent Republican statesman whom you visited with frequency and with whom you maintained the most intimate personal and political relations for years, made a young woman the victim of a mock marriage and some time afterward had to have his private car detached from a regular train and take a circuitous route to outwit the authorities who were waiting to serve the warrant issued for his arrest.

Through the powerful influence of this eminent Republican he finally got rid of the cruelly outraged young woman and the nasty affair is now a "closed incident."⁵

How is it, Mr. Roosevelt, that your virtuous indignation was not outraged by this exhibition of moral leprosy in your own personal and political household? Have you ever roared in wrath in condemnation of the moral turpitude of your own near and dear old friend? Even to the extent of a single word? Why not? Because he is a Republican and your personal friend? Would you have been equally silent and considerate had he been of the same prominence in the socialist movement?

And now, Mr. Roosevelt, what would you think of us immoral socialists if because of your friend's moral depravity we accused the Republican Party of repudiating the marriage relation, disrupting the family, breaking up the home, and annihilating civilization? That is precisely your argument and lower than that it is not possible to descend, and with all the immorality you charge upon socialists you will wait in vain for a single one to follow in your footsteps down to such unfathomable depths.

Mr. Roosevelt's Confession

In the very beginning of Mr. Roosevelt's first article he unwittingly admits that he knows little or nothing about socialism. He confesses himself unable to "define the terms" of socialism and this only because he has never read its literature, studied its philosophy, or examined its platform and declaration of principles. Otherwise he would know that its terms are clearly defined and that to confess ignorance is to utterly disqualify him for intelligent discussion. It is not strange therefore that he falls into a succession of egregious blunders and on the whole makes such a mess of it

that even his friends turn with averted gaze from the ridiculous and embarrassing exhibition.

It is safe to say that Mr. Roosevelt has never read a single standard book on socialism. If he has ever skimmed over a primer or pamphlet his two articles in the *Outlook* bear no evidence of it. He has not the dimmest conception of the historic basis of modern socialism, or of its evolutionary character and tendency, or he would have spared himself the mortification which even he must feel when he comes to realize what a long-eared exhibition he has made of himself, and in ten years from now he would gladly give a good deal more than a dollar a word could he but recall those two articles in the *Outlook*.

Socialists are All Socialists

Mr. Roosevelt's attempt to divide socialists into groups to suit his own fancy and label them to serve his own purpose will deceive no one, least of all the socialists themselves, and none will more emphatically resent his patronizing cant than the "many peculiarly high-minded men and women who like to speak of themselves as socialists, whose attitude, conscious or unconscious, is really merely an indignant recognition of the evil of present conditions and an ardent wish to remedy it, and whose socialism is really only an advanced form of liberalism."

This tempting morsel is for the good socialists, whom Mr. Roosevelt would distinguish from the peculiarly low-minded men and women who like to speak of themselves as socialists, but his bait will catch no gudgeons. He does not know socialists or he would know enough to know that they know why they are socialists and that no amount of palaver can tempt them to desert their comrades and betray their cause.

Mr. Roosevelt is now dealing with socialists who think for themselves and it will require more than his bare assertion to satisfy them that he who confesses that he knows nothing about the terms in which socialism is discussed is the very person to vault into the arena and tell them all about their own movement.

Who but a Roosevelt, with his towering vanity, egregious egotism, and oracular self-sufficiency, would have the hardihood to say to socialists that they are not socialists at all for the reason that they are "peculiarly high-minded," and therefore not afflicted with socialism but "only an advanced form of liberalism!"

Socialists will only smile at such a childish estimate of their intelligence. It is precisely because they are “peculiarly high-minded” that they are socialists and they appreciate Mr. Roosevelt’s left-handed compliment accordingly. They will not venture to reciprocate, however, by telling Mr. Roosevelt that he is not a Republican for the reason that he is a “peculiarly high-minded” gentleman.

Standard Authors All Ignored

In no standard work, in no authorized document, in the speech of no accredited representative of the socialist movement does Mr. Roosevelt find warrant for a single one of his absurd charges and so he discretely ignores them all and attempts to prop up his reckless rantings by quoting from an alleged professor of whom no one but himself has ever heard and from a renegade from the socialist movement.⁶

Upon the same vicious principle and pursuing the same illogical means and disreputable methods it would be easy to show that the Republican Party is a gang of horse-thieves, the Democratic Party a malodorous bunch of polygamists, and the American people the most loathsome aggregation of degenerates on the face of the earth.

Hillquit, Spargo, London, Simons, Wayland, Warren, Vail, Sanial, Hanford, Ghent, DeLeon, Wentworth, Hunter, and a host of other American socialist authors and writers are all conveniently ignored by Mr. Roosevelt. Their books are in all our public libraries, but Mr. Roosevelt can find nothing in them, not even a line in a single one, to serve his malign purpose, so he stoops down to the gutter and picks up, dripping with filth, *Socialism: The Nation of Fatherless Children*,⁷ and bespatters the once-clean pages of the *Outlook* with its loathsome slime.

Mr. Roosevelt’s Specifications

Let us now briefly pass over the principal specifications in Mr. Roosevelt’s reckless indictment:

First.— Mr. Roosevelt speaks of “the stage of savage socialism.” Never heard of it. Quite sure we can prove an alibi. There has never been any such “stage” except in Mr. Roosevelt’s imagination. “Savage Socialism.” Social savagery? Did you ever hear of such a ludicrous incongruity?

We will have to give it up. Mr. Roosevelt must show where this unclassified “stage” was first dug up or discovered.

Second.—“The immorality and absurdity of the doctrines of socialism as propounded by these advanced advocates, etc.,” says Mr. Roosevelt. But why does he not name these “advanced advocates” and quote from their immoral and obscene doctrines? Not one does he name and not a word does he quote. Isn’t it strange? We challenge him to produce his proof.

Third.—“The doctrinaire socialists, the extremists, the men who represent the doctrine in its most advanced form, are and must necessarily be, not only convinced opponents to private property, but also bitterly hostile to religion and morality.”

This charge is equally false. There is not a word of truth in it. Not one of these alleged “extremists” is named and not a word is quoted from their alleged “doctrine.” Socialists are not opposed to “private property,” except in the means of life, nor are they hostile to religion and morality. It is capitalism, in defense of which Mr. Roosevelt writes, that makes “private property” impossible to the masses by confiscating their products to enrich their masters. The millionaire capitalists and impoverished workers are sufficient evidence of this fact.

Private property forsooth! What chance have the millions of wage slaves, doomed to work for a bare subsistence, to accumulate private property? The great majority of them have no private property and never will have as long as they are exploited as they now are of all they produce over and above the paltry wage necessary to keep body and soul together. And as for religion and morality it is capitalism that defiles the one and destroys the other to perpetuate its brutal reign of greed and graft. Socialism, which means industrial democracy, proposes that the producers of wealth shall have that wealth, instead of idle parasites, and if this be opposition to private property the parasites and their special pleaders may make the most of it.

Fourth.—“Indeed, these thoroughgoing socialists occupy, in relation to all morality, and especially to domestic morality, a position so revolting — and I choose my words carefully — that it is difficult even to discuss it in a reputable paper. In America the leaders even of this type have usually been cautious about stating frankly that they proposed to institute free love for married life as we have it, although many of them do in a roundabout way uphold this proposition.”

There is but one way to characterize this brazen and shameless charge. It is a lie; a vicious, damnable lie. It is a deliberate and wanton insult to every socialist in America and in their name I throw the foul calumny back into the teeth of Mr. Roosevelt. Not a scintilla of proof does he produce; not one "thoroughgoing socialist" does he name and not one word does he quote in support of his monstrous falsehood.

Socialists are the most intelligent of workingmen and workingwomen; they are uniformly clean in their habits and wholesome in their behavior. They are readers, thinkers, and students. They are men and women of ideas and ideals and their modest homes attest their fealty to all the domestic virtues that sanctify the fireside and beautify the family life. All over the United States are to be found "these thoroughgoing socialists." They are sober, industrious, and capable; there are no illiterates among them and their names are never found on the police register except for the violation of lawless capitalist injunctions and in defense of the right of free assemblage and free speech. These "thoroughgoing socialists" are also class conscious and liberty loving, and it is this and not their alleged "immorality" and "free love" that provoke the wrath of Mr. Roosevelt. He knows that they know him, not alone by his words, but by his acts, and in the stately advance of this grand army of "undesirable citizens" he sees his political doom.

Fifth.— Mr. Roosevelt says that according to the exponents of scientific socialism "each man is to do what work he can, or, in other words, chooses, and in return is to take out from the common fund whatever he needs; or, what amounts to the same thing, that each man shall have equal remuneration with every other man, no matter what work is done."

Here again he draws upon his own fertile imagination. In what Socialist platform or other authorized document does he find warrant to palm off such a statement on the American people? He cites no authority and quotes no party declaration. We challenge him to do so. It is only Mr. Roosevelt who knows in detail how socialists will manage industry when they secure control, how each will be allotted his work, how he will perform it, and what his remuneration will be. Socialists do not know this, nor do they pretend to know, but Mr. Roosevelt knows all about it and as he can see no opening in socialist society for the parasite, grafter, and scheming politician, he is sorely vexed and condemns the whole industrial evolution which is making for the socialist commonwealth as an unmitigated evil which is sure to result in the "annihilation of civilization."

Socialism, Mr. Roosevelt, means industrial democracy, self-rule, and all the forces of evolution are working ceaselessly to that end. We workers have much to learn before we are fitted to assume control, but we are learning it day by day and your capitalist courts are among our teachers and the trusts you did not smash are clearing the way by cleaning up the small fry and recruiting our ranks with the dispossessed and unemployed. We are using our brains, improving our minds, and developing our economic and political class power.

You have much to say about “guiding intelligence.” We are going to develop that, too, in our own ranks, for we have brains with which to plan as well as hands with which to perform; we are going to fit ourselves by education and by our own self-imposed discipline to take control of industry from top to bottom, and when that time comes we will decide about the jobs and the remuneration and we will do it to suit ourselves, and without regard to the protests of the parasites who now rule capitalist society. For the present it is sufficient to say that substantially the same objections you now make to industrial democracy were made to political democracy a century and a half ago. But the political king had to go all the same and in due time the industrial king will have to follow him. In the meantime we are not worrying about the distribution of the jobs and the pay of the rising generation. We have every reason to believe that as it will be a socialist generation, it will be quite able to take care of itself.

Of course, Mr. Roosevelt, who believes in the “survival of the fittest,” feels outraged to think that in socialism the feeble man who does the best he can may possibly be awarded as much of the social product as any other, but what Mr. Roosevelt may happen to think now of what socialists may do years hence will not prevent them from treating their weaker brethren in accordance with their own enlightened sense of justice and fair play.

Sixth.—“If the leaders of the Socialist Party of America should today endeavor to force their followers to admit all Negroes and Chinamen to a real equality their party would promptly disband.”

Here, to use a phrase, Mr. Roosevelt gives himself dead away. He has never read even the platform of the Socialist Party or he would not make such a show of himself. He judges the Socialist Party by the Republican Party, in which the “leaders” are the whole thing and the followers are so many sheep for the shambles.

Almost everyone except Mr. Roosevelt knows that the Socialist Party admits to its membership on terms of equality men and women of all races

and nationalities, and this they do on a platform adopted by the rank and file themselves. The Socialist Party is the only party whose platform becomes effective only after it is ratified by the party membership; it is the only real democratic party and therefore the only party in which the leaders take their orders from the rank and file and not the rank and file from the leaders. This will be new politics to Mr. Roosevelt and he may reflect upon it at his leisure. The Socialist Party is composed of men and women who speak and act for themselves and not of sheep to be herded and fleeced.

Seventh.— Mr. Roosevelt says that “radical socialists adopt the principles of free love as a necessary sequence to insisting that no man shall have the right to what he earns.” At this point Mr. Roosevelt seems to have gone stark mad. At any rate it would be impossible to compress ranker idiocy within fewer words. It would be quite as rational to say that polygamy in Utah is the natural sequence of earthquakes in California. What “free love” has to do with a man getting what he earns only the pornerastic imagination of Mr. Roosevelt can perceive. He surely has “free love” on the brain and we may next expect to hear him warn the natives and wild beasts of Africa of the impending calamity.

What socialist, radical or otherwise, as Mr. Roosevelt may choose to regard him, has ever said that “no man shall have the right to what he earns?” What other persons outside of a lunatic asylum, besides Mr. Roosevelt, would say any such thing? No socialist has ever said that “no man shall have the right to what he earns,” but the exact opposite, that all men shall have the right to all they earn. And that is precisely where the shoe pinches, for if all men get all they earn, as they will in socialism, the parasites and grafters will have to go to work. As it is at present they wax fat and brutal out of the sweat and misery of the workers, and when socialists protest against this crime of crimes, Mr. Roosevelt turns purple with rage and shrieks “free love,” “free love,” “free love” as he makes his escape and vanishes in the jungles of Africa.

Eighth.— “What their movement leads to may be gathered from the fact that in the last presidential election they nominated and voted for a man who earns his livelihood as the editor of a paper which not merely practices every form of malignant and brutal slander, but condones and encourages every form of brutal wrongdoing, so long as either the slander or the violence is supposed to be at the expense of a man who owns something, wholly without regard to whether that man is himself a scoundrel or a wise, kind, and helpful member of the community.”

Thus saith Mr. Roosevelt. And if it were true the writer hereof should be in the penitentiary and the paper upon which he “earns his livelihood” suppressed. The animus of Mr. Roosevelt toward the *Appeal to Reason* is easily accounted for. Its exposé of the “Alton Steal” and Mr. Roosevelt’s executive approval of the bill that legalized the crime rankles in his bosom, and the recollection of the kidnapping conspiracy in which he was thwarted, and his intended victims snatched from the gallows to which he had condemned them, fans his rage into a perfect frenzy.

Look at him a moment, livid with hatred and malice, and then turn to the *Outlook* of November 7th in which Mr. Lyman D. Abbott, the venerable editor, announces that Mr. Roosevelt “will be associated with the *Outlook’s* editorial staff,” then loads him with fulsome adulation because of his many virtues, including his “unfailing good humor.” Oh, Mr. Abbott, what may be your idea of “unfailing good humor?” Is it that a man screams “liar” at every man who ventures to disagree with him? It is too much, unless indeed Mr. Abbott has in his declining years cultivated a rare sense of humor.

But to return to Mr. Roosevelt’s charge. May we ask him to be specific and to name a single instance of “brutal wrong-doing” the *Appeal to Reason* has practiced and to cite a single case of “malignant and brutal slander,” of which it has been guilty? To make a sweeping charge is easy enough, but we have a right to the particulars. If Mr. Roosevelt’s charge is true he can easily prove it.

The *Appeal* offered a reward of \$5,000 to anyone who would disprove Mr. Roosevelt’s connection with the “Alton Steal,” as charged and proved by documentary evidence in its columns, but there has been no taker. The “brutal wrong-doing” of the *Appeal* consisted in its uncovering the “brutal wrong-doing” of Mr. Roosevelt and his whilom friend Harriman in swindling the stock and bond holders of the Chicago & Alton out of \$63 million, the charge being specifically made and the figures plainly stated in the official report of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

The *Appeal to Reason* has no apology to make to Mr. Roosevelt. What the *Appeal* has printed it stands by. If it has been guilty of slander let it be pointed out that it may be shorn of its power for evil and shunned of honest men. But its 300,000 subscribers know that it is for publishing the truth, and not slander, that Mr. Roosevelt hates and maligns it, and that for the same reason he did all in his power to have it suppressed during his capitalist administration.

As for the “man who earns his livelihood” on the *Appeal* and for whom almost half a million Socialists cast their votes for president, he claims very little for himself. He has not the distinction of having invented a spiked policeman’s club to attest his “unfailing good humor,” nor of having a gray-haired mother ejected from his domicile, nor of entertaining prizefighters, thugs, and gun-toters, nor of shooting a fleeing fellow man in the back, nor of having made a heroic charge up San Juan Hill by proxy, nor of having “settled” a coal strike by an award which the operators insist shall be made perpetual, nor of denouncing as a scoundrel a man who raised his campaign fund after writing him “we are practical men,” nor of publicly condemning untried men in the shadow of the gallows who were later pronounced innocent by a jury of their peers, nor a good many other things in the category of virtuous achievement impossible to an “undesirable citizen.”

Ninth.— “I wish it to be remembered that I speak from the standpoint of, and in behalf of the wage worker and the tiller of the soil. These are the two men whose welfare I have before me, and for their sakes I would do anything, except anything that is wrong.”

In answer to this a chapter might be written to show that Mr. Roosevelt is and always has been the implacable enemy of the wage workers from the time (long before he became a politician and when he expressed his candid opinion) he declared that a drunken cowboy was far superior to a city workingman. When he was governor of New York he proved that the wage worker’s “welfare” was ever “before” him when he sent the troops to Croton Dam to crush the strikers who were asking to have the state law regulating the hours of labor enforced and to [restrain] the criminal contractors who were violating the law. He also showed his friendship for labor by using his power as president to have Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone hanged, and by rebuking the striking teamsters at Chicago and informing them that back of the mayor was the governor and back of the governor the president. His “settlement” of the anthracite coal strike also shows, when its terms are examined, that it defeated the strike and virtually destroyed the union. Sufficient proof of this is found in the fact that Baer and his gang of brigands are insisting that this “settlement” shall be binding forever.

Mr. Roosevelt’s sympathy is with the capitalist and not the wage worker; he associates with and is entertained by the capitalist class and the

only interest he has ever had in the "welfare" of the wage slave has been to get his vote on election day.

Tenth.— "There are dreadful woes in modern life, dreadful suffering among some of those who toil, brutal wrong-doing among some of those who make colossal fortunes by exploiting the toilers."

This is candid truth, fearlessly spoken, and Mr. Roosevelt is entitled to full credit for it. But what has Mr. Roosevelt done to mitigate this "dreadful suffering" and end this "brutal wrong-doing?" Nothing, absolutely nothing. For seven long years he and his party had complete control of every department of the national government and absolute power to correct these crying evils and yet Mr. Roosevelt is compelled to confess that crime and misery are rampant in the land. What a fearful rebuke he has pronounced upon his own administration!

Who is responsible for this appalling state of affairs? Mr. Roosevelt does not say. If the Socialist Party had been in absolute power during all these years would Mr. Roosevelt also have refrained from fixing the responsibility where it properly belonged?

Eleventh.— "Take, for instance, the doctrine of the extreme socialists, that all wealth is produced by manual workers, that the entire product of labor should be handed over every day to the laborer, that wealth is criminal in itself."

Here we have a beautiful bunch of bogies. Where on earth did Mr. Roosevelt discover them? If any socialist or anybody else has ever claimed that "all wealth is produced by manual workers," that "then entire product should be handed over every day to the laborer," and that "wealth is criminal," I have never until now heard of him. I have heard of freaks without number but this rare species must certainly be extinct. Can it be possible that Mr. Roosevelt is joking? Surely he cannot mean that any sane human being ever delivered himself of such idiotic drool. It is too utterly imbecile to discuss and I will waste no time upon it.

Twelfth.— Mr. Roosevelt caps the climax of his ignorance of socialism by classing Proudhon a socialist. Comment is unnecessary.

Thirteenth.— "Socialism is both a wide and a loose term and self-styled socialists are of many and utterly different types."

Not nearly such a "wide and loose term" as "Republicanism" and "Democracy," as used by the present capitalist parties, nor so many different types as there are so-called Republicans and Democrats. The New York World started an inquiry long ago as to "What is a Democrat?" to

which thousands of answers were made, but the World had to confess at last that discussion was vain and that the question remained unanswered. Upon fundamental principles all Socialists are agreed and they are united as one in opposition to capitalism and in favor of the socialist commonwealth.

Fourteenth.— “It will be safe to adopt whatever they (the socialists) advance that is wise, and to reject whatever they advance that is foolish.”

Having written them down as fools, freaks, fanatics, and free-lovers, Mr. Roosevelt, inferentially, still expects them to be “wise” at lucid intervals; or possibly he may himself in such an interval have felt a sting of conscience which moved him to placate them with a pleasing platitude.

Fifteenth.— “Screaming about ‘wage slavery’ is largely absurd; at this moment, for instance, I am a ‘wage slave’ of the *Outlook*.”

This is a rich and juicy morsel. Who would not be a “wage slave” on the *Outlook* at a dollar a word? Mr. Roosevelt was reared in the lap of luxury and has no more conception of wage slavery than any other scion of aristocracy. Were he compelled to dig coal in a death trap, or switch cars on a sleety night, or serve as a scavenger for a dollar a day, or work on a section in a storm and heat at ten cents an hour, or fester in a sweat-shop for a crust to eat and a rag to wear, as millions of others are forced to do all their lives, he would then have a right to talk as a wage slave and it would be safe to wager that in such a situation no “blatherskite” would “scream” more lustily about wage slavery than Theodore Roosevelt. What other “wage slave” besides Theodore Roosevelt can indulge the luxury of a year’s sporting expedition in regal style to the ends of the earth?

Sixteenth.— Mr. Roosevelt concludes his articles with the statement that he stand for “such a division of the profits of industry as shall tend to encourage intelligent and thrifty tool users to become tool owners.”

What tools now in use has Mr. Roosevelt reference to? Most of them are gigantic in size and capacity and owned by the trusts. Does Mr. Roosevelt mean these? Does he mean the locomotive or the wheelbarrow? The steam shovel or the pickaxe?

The modern tools are titanic machines. It is these Mr. Roosevelt intends shall be owned by those who use them? Oh, no, for then he would be a socialist and “free love” would gather him in. It is not that he means at all for in the same breath he talks about the “division of profits.” When the tool users become tool owners in modern industry there will be no “division of profits” for there will be no profits. The tool users will then

take all their product for themselves and there will be no profits to hand over to a set of idle tool owners.

What then does Mr. Roosevelt mean by saying that he favors the encouragement of tool users to become tool owners? Nothing. He indulges in sheer buncombe which looks well in print to eyes that can only see what the eyes can see. It is a fitting finale to Mr. Roosevelt's bombastic fiasco. He has covered pages at a dollar a word which, signed by any other than Theodore Roosevelt, would have been consigned to the receptacle for hog-wash and rot.

Unconscious Tribute to Socialism

And now let me show by the evidence of Mr. Roosevelt himself that the socialist movement, so far from being the monster he has painted it, is the most wholesome and helpful influence in the world today. First, let me call attention to the fact that there are socialist representatives in the parliaments of nearly every civilized nation on earth and that their number is rapidly increasing. They have introduced and fought for thousands of socialist party measures and their bitterest opponents are compelled to admit that practically all the reforms of the last thirty years are due to their intelligent and determined agitation. When and where has one of these representatives ever introduced a measure tending to establish free love, to break up the home, to disrupt the family, and to license immorality? I challenge the public record. It is before the world. Let Mr. Roosevelt place his finger on a single instance of a socialist occupying a seat of state introducing or attempting to introduce any one of the infamies he charges socialists with advocating, or hereafter forever hold his peace.

And now to show that Mr. Roosevelt himself regards socialism as a power for good instead of evil he may speak for himself: "At the present time there are scores of laws in the interest of labor — laws putting a stop to child labor, decreasing the hours of labor where they are excessive, putting a stop to unsanitary crowding and living...which should be passed by the national and various state legislatures; *and those who wish to do effective work against socialism would do well to turn their energies into securing the enactment of these laws.*"

Here we have it in a nutshell in Mr. Roosevelt's own words. Enact good laws and relieve the misery of socialism "will get ye it ye don't watch out!" In the United States as in Europe it is the fear of socialism alone that

promotes decent and wholesome legislation under capitalism. It is not for the sake of right that Mr. Roosevelt advises reform legislation, but only to head off socialism — and yet he condemns socialism as the most debauching influence on earth. And here we may leave him with such trophies as he may carry from the field of socialism.

The Socialist Movement

The socialist movement is today the greatest and grandest on the face of the earth. More than 30 million men, women, and children are marching proudly to its music and singing joyously the inspiring anthem of its approaching triumph.

They know socialism is the product of evolution and that no power on earth can arrest its march to victory. They demand the earth and all its bounties for all mankind. They are animated by the high and holy spirit of universal brotherhood.

Reviled they have been and they will be but they falter not for they well know that they must pay the penalty of being in advance of their time and clearing the way for a brighter day and a happier humanity. The countless charges brought against them to discredit their movement are not new in history. The Great Soul of Galilee was not only reviled but nailed to the cross by the Pharisees two thousand years ago for his incomparably loving and loyal devotion to the lowly and oppressed.

Socialists are socialists because of their love of freedom and their horror of slavery; and they insist upon the equal freedom of all. They want nothing and will accept nothing that is not granted to all upon the same terms. They behold the poverty and misery of the aged and infirm, the sad-eyed and despairing fathers, the weeping mothers, and the pinched little faces of the babes in their squalid cribs, and they declare in grim earnest that these frightful crimes and cruelties shall cease forever!

These men and women stand for social revolution; for the overthrow of capitalist despotism and the rearing in its place of an industrial democracy, in which the people shall own and control the means of life, and in which there shall be work for all, abundance for all, and to this emancipating program the Socialist Party is irrevocably committed, nor will it cease its agitation until its labors are crowned with triumph.

The Dear Love of Comrades

With such as these men and women I am proud and happy to cast my lot. I care nothing for the world's honors. Its prizes have no temptation for me. I began life, if I am not now, a wage slave. And there I stand today. The happiest privilege I have is to call the wage slave my comrade. He and I were long in the trenches together. We know each other. And we love and trust each other. I want nothing he may not have. He is my brother and when I clasp his honest hand I feel a thrill of joy.

There is no slave on earth who is not my equal. Through his mask of misery and his shreds and tatters I recognized in the vilest scavenger my brother. For him I am ready to fight and if need be to die. There is where I stand and where all socialists stand — and this is our free love and immortality.

And when socialism comes — as comes it will as certain as the Mississippi rolls to the Gulf — if I am still living, I shall strive to secure for my weaker brother and sister the same remuneration, the same treatment, and the same even-handed justice I expect for myself.

The present generation may revile socialists and deny socialism, but future generations will make immortal atonement.

Published as “Debs’ Reply to Roosevelt” in *Appeal to Reason*, whole no. 700 (May 1, 1909), p. 1.

¹ Theodore Roosevelt, “Socialism: I. Where We Can Not Work with Socialists,” *The Outlook* [New York], vol. 91 (March 20, 1909), pp. 619-623.

² Theodore Roosevelt, “Socialism: II. Where We Can Work with Socialists,” *The Outlook*, vol. 91 (March 27, 1909), pp. 662-664.

³ Albion Woodbury Small (1854-1926) was the founder of the department of sociology at the University of Chicago in 1892 — the first such department in the United States. He also established the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1895. Although never the head of the department of economics as Debs indicates here, Small did touch on economic themes in his 1907 book, *Adam Smith and Modern Sociology*.

⁴ Roosevelt singled out George D. Herron (1862-1925) for criticism as an exemplar of socialist “immorality.” Herron, an ordained Congregationalist minister and the father of five, left his family in 1899 to be with Carrie Rand (1867-1914), daughter of the benefactor who endowed the chair of “applied Christianity” which Herron occupied at Iowa College (Grinnell University). Herron was forced to resign his faculty position due to the resulting scandal and the pair eventually emigrated to Europe. Like so many intellectuals in the early Socialist Party, Herron would become a social patriot during World War I.

⁵ The editors have been unable to locate further details of this event.

⁶ Reference to, respectively, English statistics professor Karl Pearson (1857-1936), a committed socialist, and archaeologist Flinders Petrie (1853-1942), author of *Janus in Modern Life*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907.

⁷ David Goldstein, *Socialism: The Nation of Fatherless Children*. Boston: Union News League, 1904.