

THE FUTURE STATE.

(By WILHELM LIEBKNECHT, IN *Cosmopolis*.)

THE old proverb, "A fool can ask more questions than a hundred wise men can answer," describes very well, says our comrade Liebknecht, the position of those persons who are continually demanding of us descriptions and definitions of what the future state will be. For who knows what the next day, or even the next hour, may bring forth? Yet in almost every parliament in Europe the subject is earnestly debated, showing, at any rate, that the seriousness of the social question has become so overpowering as to resemble the fascination which the gaze of a serpent has over the will power of a timid bird. Our comrade has evidently a very high appreciation of the English nation and the characteristics of our countrymen, and he devotes a portion of his article to an eulogy of those characteristics which we think is hardly deserved. He continues: The view taken in England of the social question is an unprejudiced one. The difference in this connection between England and Germany is at once apparent if we compare the attitude of the English Government towards the railway workers' strike, and that of the German Government towards the simultaneous dockers' strike at Hamburg.

As soon as the news of the Hamburg strike reached Berlin the Government at once proclaimed themselves antagonistic to the workers, and threw the whole weight of their influence into the scale on the side of the masters.

In England it was not so, and in the railway strike, as also in the late engineering dispute, the Government was unprejudiced, and offered, successfully in the former case, their mediation. But in Germany, the trades organisations, notwithstanding the fact that the right of coalition is guaranteed by law, are considered, and often treated, as bands of rebels against society.

Socialism is a modern phenomenon; philanthropic dreams and utopian fantasies must not be confounded with it. Nor has primitive communism anything in common with Socialism, which will, and must, sweep away private property in the means of labour.

Modern Socialism necessarily supposes the development of capitalism. It is the product and consequence of capitalism, and is the organic continuation of capitalism in the same way that capitalism is the organic continuation of earlier economic forms.

Socialists are not, as is persistently supposed, so childish as to think that for thousands of years mankind has been wandering on the wrong track, and and that for the first time Socialists have discovered the right way and want to guide the rest of mankind in it even by leading strings. We know that the form of society is due neither to arbitrariness nor caprice. We know that its political and social arrangements correspond to the existing economic conditions. We know that primitive peoples with primitive weapons and primitive methods of production are incapable of any civilisation as we know it to-day.

What is the future state? Where does the future begin and the present end? Is to-morrow not the future of to-day, as yesterday is its past? The poet can say to the moment,

"Tarry awhile, thou art so fair."

That is the poet's right. But the moments tarry not, but fall incessantly into the river of the past.

Was not the state and the society of to-day the future state and future society of yesterday? The truth has not yet been mastered that immobile

being never was, is not, and cannot be—that all is an eternal growth, a continual development.

We Socialists are expected to know to a hair how the Socialist future state will appear. Did the supposed founders of the present bourgeois society, which our interrogators have always before them as the model of any social order, have the remotest idea of what to-day would be? In reality, the present order of things is a direct development out of earlier conditions.

The absurdity of this view is manifested in the stereotyped phrase, "Social-Democracy will make *tabula rasa*, overturn the existing order of things, and on the ruins erect a new edifice on an entirely new plan." As if society was a cast iron structure. As if such a thing ever happened or could happen. The thought could only arise in the minds of men misled in their knowledge of human history.

Historical criticism has long since cleared up this fabulous conception of history, and has demonstrated that all achievements, transformations, discoveries, &c., are the work, not of single individuals, but of collective endeavour. In short, that the world's history is the history of collective labours, and that these labours are not the result of caprice, but arise from necessity, following certain laws.

In Germany the economic revolution, assisted by that "enemy of revolution," Prince Bismarck, changed the country from an agricultural to an industrial state, set the capitalist factory system in the place of the system of small industry carried on by peasant proprietors, and drove millions of the rural population into the large towns, a revolution which, in extent and in destructive effect, is equalled only by the mighty English industrial revolution at the latter end of the last century, a revolution which overthrew the basis of previously existing society, and created that general feeling of uneasiness which has given rise to the German Social-Democracy.

Liebknrecht goes on to say that the Socialist agitation is accused of being immoral because it makes the people discontented with the conditions under which they are forced to exist, without having at the same time new conditions ready constructed or planned out. But this, says he, merely brings us to the position of the founders of the present state, as usually accepted, among whom, standing in the forefront, are the "Titans" of the French Revolution.

"Had these founders of the present state—*our present, their future*—the most visionary conception of what the present would be? Had the representatives of the Tiers Etat—had Mirabeau, Desmoulins, Robespierre, Danton, or Marat—any idea of what the bourgeois society would be, whose course they were shaping? Had they any foreboding of the social and economic revolution which the dominion of the Tiers Etat would produce? Had they any conception of capitalism, with its class war?"

If anyone at the time had prophesied that, fifty-nine years—not two generations—from the storming of the Bastille, the twin brothers of the Tiers Etat—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—would lacerate each other in a six days' conflict, under the very shadow of the July Column which marked the spot where the Bastille stood, and in that time destroy more human life than was spent in all the *grandes journées* of the French Revolution they would have been thought mad. Yet so it was, and the year 1848 found bourgeoisie and proletariat in open and avowed war. The June battle of the "mad year" tore into shreds the bond which united the *frères ennemis*, whose antagonisms and class struggles have filled the second half of the nineteenth century.

The end of the struggle is Socialism. The rising spiral line of human development must go through Socialism.

Whether the development to Socialism is to be peaceful or violent; whether it is to be accomplished by the path of reform, or of revolution, is a question for the greater or less intellects of the governing classes. In a free State, such as Switzerland, sanguinary conflicts of any importance may be excluded from consideration. But in lands whose Governments consider themselves as the agents and authorities of a single class, and look upon it as the business of the State to stamp out all agitation, and to suppress every movement and organisation of the working class—severe conflicts will not be avoided. But if we consider what revolutions and struggles it has cost to establish the present order of things, we may comfort ourselves with the reflection that the establishment of the future state will not be nearly so expensive in blood and tears . . .

Our comrade goes on to discuss two frequent objections that are made against Social-Democracy, namely, that its realisation will be in effect the establishment of a tyranny, or of a directorate, and at the same time deals with the objections raised by Anarchism. Liebknecht shows the absurdity of these objections, and points out that what really happens is that capitalism is endeavouring to brand Socialism with the evils that it has itself perpetrated by accusing Socialism of desiring to establish a tyranny, destroy property and the family, and of practising free love, and so forth. He continues:—That our civilisation has not improved everything and everybody is quite true; but this is due not to the civilisation, but to the barbarism which it has not yet overcome

Human civilisation divides itself into two categories:—

First. The dominion over the powers of nature: the improvement of the means and instruments of labour, and in the augmentation of wealth.

Second. The knowledge of nature. Knowledge. Science. Art.

Both branches of activity grow one with another. Knowledge of nature is power over nature, and thus is all civilisation the result of human labour.

The struggle for existence has produced in human society an economic inequality, and an opposition of interests that have created an ever-flowing stream of vice and crime. Whoever sinks in the struggle is lost and condemned, and so long as interests in prostitution, lying, deceit, robbery, and murder exist, these vices will remain, although every second man be clothed in a policeman's uniform. And only when the antagonistic interests of to-day are merged and lost in the Socialist harmony of the future will an end to them be found and the way of the vicious and the criminal be closed.

In Socialist society all women and men, without distinction or exception, will be able to drink at the fountain of knowledge and education, and secure participation in all the acquisitions of culture. In the Socialist State the common duty of labour will be a basic principle—with the exception of the weak and sick—and labour will be not only the spring of communal wealth, but also of individual morality. The labour of all able to work. The labour of each member of society for himself and the community.

Under the domain of Socialism society will have two chief functions:—

1. The organisation of material work.

2. The organisation of education as the moral and intellectual basis of society.

Liebknecht goes on to deal with the extent to which the concentration of capital into few hands has progressed, and says:—

“The concentration of capital, which carries with it the extinction of small property-owners, deprives industry, on a small scale, of its conditions

of existence, so that if industry and husbandry are not to become monopolies entirely controlled by a handful of capitalists, Socialist industry carried on by and for the community is the only alternative that remains as an economic and social necessity."

The transition from capitalism into Socialism will be much easier than was, and is, the transition from bourgeois small production into capitalist factory production. It will not doom millions upon millions, through an anarchical economy, to the torments of want and poverty. No one will come to want. No one will lose anything that he values, and the great mass of men will rise out of misery and all will gain the highest thing that man can gain—an existence worthy of humanity.

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