

THE UPLIFTING OF THE WORKING PROLETARIAT

The word "proletariat" conveyed at one time in the history of capitalist production the idea of extreme degradation. Even to-day there are people who entertain this notion, and among them not a few who claim to be abreast of the times. This, however, arises from a woeful confusion of thought. However numerous the external marks may have been which, at one time, the working proletariat had in common with the slums, even then the two were separated by a deep chasm.

The slums have continued to be essentially the same, in whatever historic epoch and under whatever system they may have made their appearance. The slums of New York, Chicago, San Francisco, or any other large modern centre of population, are hard to distinguish from those of ancient Rome. On the other hand, the modern working proletariat is a peculiar phenomenon, never before noticed in the history of mankind.

Contrasts between the Slums and the Working Proletariat.

Between the slums and the working proletariat of capitalist production there is above all the immense and fundamental difference that the former always were and still continue to be parasites, whereas the latter is one of the principal roots of modern society—a root that develops, not only into leading importance, but into the only one from which society draws its strength and support. The working proletariat is a proletariat, but not an alms-taking element. So far from its being supported by society, it supports society with its labor. True enough, during the early days of the capitalist system, the working proletariat looked upon itself as a pauper class, and upon the capitalist who exploited it as a benefactor, as the provider of work, and, consequently, as the bread-giver. Of course, this patriarchal relation is highly pleasing to the capitalists; they still demand from their workmen for the wages paid to them, not only the labor contracted for, but also humility and gratitude.

But the capitalist system can nowhere proceed very far without the patriarchal conditions that exist at its inception going wholly by the board. However enslaved and ignorant the workmen may at any time be, they realize, sooner or later, that they are bread-givers of the capitalists, and not vice versa. While they remain poor, or even become poorer, the capitalist becomes ever richer. And when they demand more bread from the capitalist, from this would-be patriarch, he gives them a stone.

The working proletarians differ from the slums and from the servant and menial classes in that they do not live upon the exploitation carried on by the exploiters; and they differ from the workers under former systems of production in that they do not live and labor together with their exploiters, and that all the personal bonds and relations that existed between these have wholly disappeared between the modern employer and employe. They live in miserable tenements or rickety frame houses that are a libel upon the word "home," while they rear palaces for the exploiters; they lavish while they spread for him a luxurious feast; they go unclad, while they prepare for him costly garments; they toil and mold till they drop with exhaustion to furnish him and his means whereby to kill time.

Why the Working Class Hates and Despises the Rich.

The contrast between these two elements is a very different one from that between the rich and the poor man of pre-capitalist days; and very different also between the capitalist and the small man" of to-day. The latter envies the rich man, whom he looks up to with admiration, who is the example he would imitate, the ideal he holds up to himself; he wishes to be in that capitalist's place, and become an exploiter like him; he never for a moment thinks of abolishing the system of exploitation. The working proletariat, on the contrary, does not envy the modern rich man; it does not wish itself in his place; it hates and despises him; it hates him as the exploiter; it despises him as a drone. At first the working proletarian hates only those capitalists with whom he is brought into direct contact, but soon he realizes the fact that all of them stand in the same posture toward him, and his hatred, which originally was personal, develops into a conscious hostility towards the whole capitalist class.

relations that existed between them and their "masters" excluded all thought of such class antipathies; hostilities might and did often break out between the master and his underlings personally, but these could never be carried beyond a certain point without forthwith stopping production itself; and, as a result, whatever lengths they went to, reconciliation always followed. Under the capitalist system, however, the workers may entertain the most bitter enmity against their employers without production being thereby interfered with, and even without the employer being at all aware of it.

Capitalist Class Unconsciously Trains the Working Class in the Methods Required for the Overthrow of Capitalism.

The conditions themselves under which labor is performed in the capitalist system point out to the proletariat the necessity of firmly holding together, of moving in a body, and of subordinating the individual to the whole. While, in the classic days of handicraft, each individual produced a whole article himself, capitalist industry is based upon co-operative labor. Here the individual worker can do nothing without his fellow-worker. If they start to work united and planfully, the capacity of each is doubled and trebled. Thus their labor itself brings home to them the power of union, and develops among them the sense of voluntary and gladsome discipline—both of which are the conditions precedent for Socialist production, and are likewise the conditions precedent for the successful struggle of the proletariat against the system of exploitation that prevails under capitalist production. And thus it happens that capitalism itself trains the proletarians in the methods requisite for its own overthrow, and educates them in the system of labor that will be required of them in Socialist society.

More powerfully, perhaps, than co-operation in labor does the equality in the present conditions of work tend to awaken among the proletarians the sense of solidarity among themselves. In a modern well-developed mill there is as good as no distinction of rank, no hierarchy, among the workers. The higher posts are, as a rule, inaccessible to the proletarians; at all events, they are so few that they do not affect the masses. Slight is the number of those who can be corrupted by these favorite posts. For the large majority the conditions of labor are identical; to the individual all possibility is shut off of lifting himself up alone; he can better his condition only if the condition of all his fellow-toilers is bettered. The capitalist realizes this fact and its effects upon his men, and in not a few cases he tries to counteract both by the introduction of artificial distinctions in his mills, to the end of throwing the apple of discord among the workers; but such is the leveling influence and power of modern large production that all such schemes are unable to undermine permanently the sense of solidarity which it evokes in the ranks of the working proletariat.

The longer the capitalist system of production lasts, all the more powerfully does the solidarity of the proletariat manifest itself; all the stronger does it cast roots, all the more prominently does it stand out as one of the distinguished characteristics of the working proletariat.

Contrasts in the Solidarity of the Workers under Feudalism and under Capitalism.

Already in the days of the journeymen mechanics the beginnings may be found of international organizations. The exploited classes of those days showed they were able to rise above national barriers; but there was one barrier above which they could not lift themselves—that of their own trade. The hattermaker, for instance, of one country felt one with those of others, but the shoemakers, tailors, and other workers of his own country remained strangers to him. At that time the various trades were separated by sharp lines; the applicant for admission to any of them was held to a long apprenticeship before he became a journeyman, and he remained loyal to his trade for life. The power and prosperity of his trade were his own; although, in a certain sense, the journeyman's interests were opposed to those of his guild master, yet were they opposed to those of both master and journeyman of all other trades. The spectacle was frequent during the most flourishing period of the guilds that the journeymen of the various trades were involved in fierce strifes with one another.

The capitalist system of production, on the contrary, throws the various trades together and mixes them inextricably. In a capitalist establishment, people of different trades are seen generally working together, and jointly operating towards a common end. Furthermore, the capitalist system has the tendency to wipe out the very idea of a trade in

production: the machine shortens the time of apprenticeship, that formerly extended over years, down to weeks and days; it makes it possible for the several workmen to pass from one occupation to another without great difficulty, and it often even compels them to the change by frequently rendering them superfluous in their former lines, throwing them out of work, and compelling them to look for another job. The freedom in the choice of a pursuit which the philistines fear to lose in Socialist society, is a thing that has lost all meaning to the working class under the present system.

Under Capitalism All Sections of the Working Class Are Welded Together.

Under such circumstances, it has become an easy matter for the workingman to lift himself above the barriers before which the journeyman of old halted. The sense of solidarity among the modern working proletariat is, accordingly, not only international, it now extends over the whole working class.

Already in the Middle Ages there was a variety of forms of wage labor; neither are the conflicts between wage workers and their exploiters something new; but it was not until the rule of the capitalist system came into force that the spectacle was presented of the rise of an embattled class of wage-workers, conscious of the oneness of their interests, and ever more ready to subordinate to the interests of their class, as a whole, not only their personal, but also their local and, in so far as these still continue to exist, their separate trade interests. It is only in our own century that the struggles of the wage workers, the working proletariat, against exploitation assume the character of a class struggle. It is only by virtue thereof that these struggles are enabled to aim at a higher goal than that of simply removing this or that objectionable feature of the existing system, and that the Labor Movement has become a revolutionary movement.

Under these conditions, the horizon of the working class broadens steadily. This holds good with regard to the working proletariat employed in large production; but the same as the industrial form of capital becomes more and more the standard for all capital, and even for all economic undertakings within the reach of capitalist nations, so likewise do the thoughts and sentiments of that portion of the proletariat that is engaged in large production strike the keynote for the thoughts and sentiments of the whole wage-working class. The consciousness of the unity of the interests of all takes possession of one set of workers after another, just as fast as the all-pervading influence of large production forces itself into the various classes of industries.

Thus there rises out of the despised, maltreated, degraded proletariat a historic power before which the powers that be have begun to tremble. Thus a new class is in the process of formation that brings with it a new code of morals and new philosophy; a class that grows daily in numbers, in compactness, in consciousness of its mission, in intelligence, and into an economic necessity.—"The Working Class," by Kautsky.

"The People"

Official Organ of and Owned by the Australian Socialist League and Socialist Labor Party. A Weekly Paper published for the purpose of spreading Socialist Principles and organizing Socialist Thought. Its mission is to educate and prepare the working class for the approaching day of their emancipation from wage slavery; to point the way to class-conscious organization for economic and political action that the days of capitalist bondage might be quickened into the dead things of the past.

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THE MATERIALISM OF THE REFORMATION

When Europe emerged from the Middle Ages, the rising middle class of the towns constituted its revolutionary element. It had conquered a recognized position within medieval feudal organizations, but this position had become too narrow for its expansive power. The development of the middle class, the bourgeoisie, became incompatible with the maintenance of the feudal system; the feudal system, therefore, had to fall.

But the great international center of feudalism was the Roman Catholic Church. It united the whole of feudalized Western Europe, in spite of all internal wars, into one grand political system, opposed as much to the schismatic Greeks as to the Mohammedan countries. It surrounded feudal institutions with the halo of divine consecration. It had organized its own hierarchy on the feudal model, and, lastly, it was itself by far the most powerful feudal lord, holding, as it did, fully one-third of the soil of the Catholic world. Before profane feudalism could be successfully attacked in each country and in detail, this, its sacred central organization, had to be destroyed.

Moreover, parallel with the rise of the middle class went on the great revival of science; astronomy, mechanics, physics, anatomy, physiology, were again cultivated. And the bourgeoisie for the development of its industrial production, required a science which ascertained the physical properties of natural objects and the modes of action of the forces of Nature. Now, up to then science had but been the humble handmaid of the Church, had not been allowed to overstep the limits set by faith, and for that reason had been no science at all. Science rebelled against the Church; the bourgeoisie could not do without science, and, therefore, had to join in the rebellion.

The rising middle class was bound to come into collision with the established religion because every struggle against feudalism, at that time, had to take on a religious disguise, had to be directed against the Church in the first instance. But if the universities and the traders of the cities started the cry, it was sure to find, and did find, a strong echo in the masses of the country people, the peasants, who everywhere had to struggle for their existence with their feudal lords, spiritual and temporal.

The long fight of the bourgeoisie against feudalism culminated in three great, decisive battles.

The first was what is called the Protestant Reformation in Germany. The war-cry raised against the Church by Luther was responded to by two insurrections of a political nature; first, that of the lower nobility under Franz von Sickingen, 1523; then the great Peasants' War, 1525. Both were defeated, chiefly in consequence of the indecision of the parties most interested, the burghers of the towns—an indecision into the causes of which we cannot here enter. From that moment the struggle degenerated into a fight between the local princes and the central power, and ended by blotting out Germany for two hundred years from the politically active nations of Europe. The Lutheran reformation produced a new creed indeed, a religion adapted to absolute monarchy. No sooner were the peasants of Northeast Germany converted to Lutheranism than they were from freemen reduced into serfs.

But where Luther failed, Calvin won the day. Calvin's creed was one fit for the boldest of the bourgeoisie at his time. His predestination doctrine was the religious expression of the fact that in the commercial world of competition success or failure does not depend upon a man's activity or cleverness, but upon circumstances uncontrollable by him. It is not of him that willetch, or of him that runeth, but of the mercy of unknown superior economic powers; and this was especially true at a period of economic revolution, when all old commercial routes and centers were replaced by new ones, when India and America were opened to the world, and when even the most sacred economic articles of faith—the value of gold and silver—began to totter and to break down. Calvin's church institution was thoroughly democratic and republican; and where the kingdom of God was republicanized, could the kingdoms of this world remain subjected to monarchs, bishops, and lords? While German Lutheranism became a willing tool in the hands of princes, Calvinism founded a republic in Holland, and active republican parties in England, and, above all, Scotland.

In Calvinism, the second great bourgeois upheaval found its doctrine ready cut and dried. This upheaval took place in England. The middle class of the towns brought it on, and the

yeomanry of the country districts fought it out. Curiously enough, in all the three great bourgeois risings, the peasantry furnishes the army that has to do the fighting; and the peasantry is just the class that, the victory once gained, is most surely ruined by the economic consequences of that victory.

Upon the excess of revolutionary activity there necessarily followed the inevitable reaction which in its turn went beyond the point where it might have maintained itself. After a series of oscillations, the new center of gravity was at last attained and became a new starting-point.

This new starting-point was a compromise between the rising middle class and the ex-feudal landowners. The latter, though called, as now, the aristocracy, had been long since on the way which led them to become what Louis Philippe in France became at a much later period, "the first bourgeois of the kingdom." Fortunately for England, the old feudal barons had killed one another during the Wars of the Roses. Their successors, though mostly scions of the old families, had been so much out of the direct line of descent that they constituted quite a new body, with habits and tendencies far more bourgeois than feudal. They fully understood the value of money, and at once began to increase their rents by turning hundreds of small farmers out and replacing them by sheep. Henry VIII, while squandering the Church lands, created fresh bourgeois landlords by wholesale; the innumerable confiscations of estates, regranted to absolute or relative upstarts, and continued during the whole of the seventeenth century, had the same result. Consequently, ever since Henry VII, the English "aristocracy," far from counteracting the development of industrial production, had, on the contrary, sought to indirectly profit thereby and there had always been a section of the great landowners willing, from economical or political reasons, to co-operate with the leading men of the financial and industrial bourgeoisie. The compromise of 1689 was, therefore, easily accomplished. The political spoils of "peel and plaçé" were left to the great landowning families, provided the economic interests of the financial, manufacturing and commercial middle class were at that time powerful enough to determine the general policy of the nation. There might be squabbles about matters of detail, but, on the whole, the aristocratic oligarchy knew too well that its own economic prosperity was irrevocably bound up with that of the industrial and commercial middle class.—Historical Materialism, by Frederick Engels.

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Those readers who have less time at their disposal may not be able to profit by the work to its full extent, but even one reading will store their minds with valuable knowledge and broaden their horizon so as to enable them to grasp the meaning of events now going on better than they could otherwise do.

The previous editions of the work were expensive, four dollars a volume being almost prohibitive, but the increased call for the work has compelled this latest stereotyped edition and has justified the firm in setting out the work at \$1.50, placing the book within the reach of all.

The Labor News is prepared to furnish the work at the publisher's price of \$1.50.

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PLATFORM

Adopted at the Eleventh National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party, July 1904.

The Socialist Labor Party of America, in convention assembled, reasserts the inalienable right of man to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We hold that the purpose of government is to secure to every citizen the enjoyment of this right; but taught by experience we hold furthermore that such right is illusory to the majority of the people, to wit, the working class, under the present system of economic inequality that is essentially destructive of THEIR life, THEIR liberty and THEIR happiness.

We hold that the true theory of politics is that the machinery of government must be controlled by the whole people; but again taught by experience we hold furthermore that the true theory of economics is that the means of production must likewise be owned, operated and controlled by the people in common. Man cannot exercise his right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness without the ownership of the land on and the tool with which to work. Deprived of these, his life, his liberty and his fate fall into the hands of the class that owns those essentials for work and production.

We hold that the existing contradiction between the theory of democratic government and the fact of a despotic economic system—the private ownership of the natural and social opportunities—divides the people into two classes: the Capitalist Class and the Working Class; throws society into the convulsions of the Class Struggle; and perverts government to the exclusive benefit of the Capitalist Class.


Thus labor is robbed of the wealth which it alone produces, is denied the means of self-employment, and, by compulsory idleness in wage slavery, is even deprived of the necessities of life.

Against such a system the Socialist Labor Party raises the banner of revolt, and demands the unconditional surrender of the Capitalist Class.

The time is fast coming when in the natural course of social evolution, this system, through the destructive action of its failures and crises, on the one hand, and the constructive tendencies of its trusts and other capitalist combinations, on the other hand, will have worked out its own downfall.

We, therefore, call upon the wage workers of America to organize under the banner of the Socialist Labor Party into a class conscious body, aware of its rights and determined to conquer them.

And we also call upon all other intelligent citizens to place themselves squarely upon the ground of Working Class interests, and join us in this mighty and noble work of human emancipation, so that we may put summary end to the existing barbarous class conflict by placing the land and all the means of production, transportation and distribution into the hands of the people as a collective body, and substituting the Co-operative Commonwealth for the present state of planless production, industrial war and social disorder—a commonwealth in which every worker shall have the free exercise and full benefit of his faculties, multiplied by all the modern factors of civilization.



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OFFICIAL

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. Paul Augustine, National Secretary.

N. E. C. SUB-COMMITTEE. Regular meeting of the N. E. C. Sub-Committee was held on Wednesday, July 29th.

VIRGINIA S. E. C. The S. E. C. of the S. L. P. of Virginia met in regular session at Newport News, Va.

TO THE SECTIONS AND MEMBERS-AT-LARGE OF THE S. L. P. IN COLORADO. Comrades: Section Denver, having been duly notified.

Section Denver, having been duly notified of its selection as the seat of the S. E. C.

Five members are to be elected, hence each member of the Party can vote for five only.

All together for Preston and Munro! For the S. E. C., Geo. Anderson, State Sec'y.

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OPERATING FUND.

We would gladly cease putting these appeals in our party press, but unless the comrades send in many more subscriptions...

The past week has been a very poor one in point of subscriptions and in donations. We must urge you to do one thing or the other.

Table with 2 columns: Name, Amount. Total: \$16.75. Grand Total: \$2,887.19.

TEXAS STATE CONVENTION.

The State Convention of the S. L. P. will be held in San Antonio, on TUESDAY, August 11th.

MISSOURI STATE CONVENTION.

The Socialist Labor Party of Missouri will hold its State convention on SATURDAY, August 8th.

ST. LOUIS PICNIC.

Section St. Louis, Socialist Labor Party, has arranged for a picnic and outing at Wolz's Grove.

CINCINNATI, ATTENTION!

On SUNDAY, August 16, Section Cincinnati, S. L. P., will give its second picnic of the year.

Enough of that product, which is claimed "made Milwaukee famous."

GILLHAUS TOUR EASTWARD.

- Butte Mont.—August 21-22. Fargo, N. D.—August 24. Duluth, Minn.—August 25.

WHERE ARE WE AT?

TENDENCY TO DEPEND UPON THE FEW TO DO THE WORK OF ALL

Ninety-three subs to the Weekly and 27 to the Daily People is the record of this week.

These sending in two or more were: Chas. Pierson, Peoria, Ill. ... 22. O. W. Neebe, Chicago, Ill. ... 2.

SWISS GOVERNMENT.

Breaks All Precedent by Deciding to Extradite Russian Political Prisoner.

Brussels, Belgium, July 18. — Up to the present, all civilized states have made it a practice never to extradite persons accused or convicted of political crimes.

THE MEXICAN CASE.

HOW TO RID THE WORLD OF POVERTY.

Once I was talking to a number of girl friends of mine, when the subject of poverty came up. Some of these girls were very aristocratic and conservative.

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Herewith are given the titles of a few works that are classics and great value for the money.

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CHILDREN'S HOUR

Dear Little Comrades:

To-day we have a composition by Comrade Katherine which, if I didn't know our little comrade, would make me think it came from a grown-up.

When the children are old enough to take part in the world they will know all about Socialism, and not allowed themselves to be fooled by old parties and old ideas.

BY FORCE?

In Comrade Katherine's composition, "How to Rid the World of Poverty," she says: "The workers must take the machinery into their own hands."

HOW TO RID THE WORLD OF POVERTY.

Once I was talking to a number of girl friends of mine, when the subject of poverty came up.

We all agreed that poverty was a lack of the means of living. But most of them were utterly ignorant of the cause.

But it is possible to rid the world of this system of class exploitation. The workers must be organized according to the industries.

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into one large industrial union. This method of organization is very different from the method which is now and has been used.

The girls to whom I had been talking, after careful study, deep thought, and many questions, became interested in Socialism.

Katherine Flynn. 511 E. 134th St., New York, July 16, 1908.

Well, teacher dear, suppose the workers do use force to get back what belongs to them. does that need frighten you?

But, teacher dear, let's go back to glorious history, and how did God free the Israelites from Pharaoh?

Now, dear teacher, we'll skip the many history stories of the old world where force was used in getting things back.

I know you love United States history, the glorious land of the free and home of the brave.

ASSASSINATIONS AND SOCIALISM. From a Speech by August Bebel, Delivered at Berlin.