Political Socialism
Capturing the Government

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Dedicated
to
the vanguard of revolutionary thought—the philosophers, the chair-warmers—
from whom the author has received the best part of the
contents of this booklet,
and to whose criticism it is hereby submitted.
INTRODUCTION

The most vital controversy that is being agitated within the revolutionary movement at present deals with this question: What can the working class gain or lose by political action? The whole revolutionary movement is lining up in opposing camps, and the conflict between the two breaks out with increasing frequency and bitterness; yet neither side has so far explained its position in a comprehensive manner; both sides are rather avoiding open and thorough discussion for the sake of harmony.

Such harmony is dearly bought and treacherous. It is safe to say that the greater part of the bitterness is due to the very attempt to stifle the controversy. But even if harmony could be had by stifling this question it would be altogether too big a price to pay for peace. The question is vitally important to us, and if we fail to deal with it quickly it will only weaken the revolutionary movement, and may cause great injury to our class.

It is for this reason that I make this attempt to show that the working class have little or nothing to gain through political action, and that the energy expended in such action is worse than wasted.
The political system we have today grew out of the old guild system, which can be traced back to the earliest historic times. While the early history of the guilds is not so well known, we do know that the guilds were strong enough to be a political factor in the Roman Empire. They grew in strength during the entire period of feudalism, and established municipal government in many important cities long before feudalism was broken up in national affairs. The primary purpose of the guild was to protect the interests of a trade or handicraft, but the conflict between the feudal barons and the craftsmen and traders forced the guilds to combine and establish municipal governments for their own protection. As the class of traders and craftsmen became more numerous and wealthy, they also acquired greater political power, until they were able to break the power of feudalism and establish a national government adapted to serve their interests. After this national government was firmly established, the guilds began to dissolve and disappear, and the political government took charge of all the economic questions of the capitalist class.

It will be seen that not only the guilds, but also the municipal and national governments which developed out of the guild system, were distinctly economic organizations. The capitalist class had no other means of settling
business disputes, or deciding the proper economic relations between themselves, than through this political government. The political government was the only economic organization the capitalist class had from the time the guilds began to dissolve up to the beginning of the greater capitalism.

THE REAL GOVERNMENT TODAY.

The building up of corporations and trusts, and combinations of trusts, marks the beginning of a new economic organization of capitalism, a new government, in which neither the working class nor the greater part of the capitalist class can take any important part. This new government—which, for convenience, may be called the Industrial Plutocracy—may at times make use of the political government; but, in proportion as it develops, it becomes more competent to settle the economic questions of the capitalist class, and the political government loses in the same proportion its character as an economic organization.

Today the Industrial Plutocracy is the real power, and the state is little more than a tool or a dummy which could be discarded if it were not that the people would resent the abolition of what they are pleased to call "their government." The state has lost the greater part of the economic power it once had, and another economic organization has grown up which is far more powerful than the state ever was. While the
political government was a real economic power, it was immensely important for any class in society to have political representation; but when the political government has lost its power, such representation can be of no real value to any class.

There was a time when the state could levy tribute on all groups of capitalists for the maintenance of civil institutions and military force, and could, if need be, compel submission from any and all groups of capitalists. Now, the stronger groups of capitalists can force the smaller capitalists to pay the tax for them; and the state can use neither civil nor military power against them. The Industrial Plutocracy controls the state—and, through it, the military power.

There was a time when laws were really made in congress and legislature; but the laws are now written by corporation lawyers, and legislators vote to pass them under economic pressure applied by the Industrial Plutocracy.

There was a time when political officials were really elected by the people, and would try to serve the people because the people could pay what was then considered good salaries; now the real election takes place at a convention where the people have no voice, and the Industrial Plutocracy can pay larger salaries and can therefore command better service.

There was a time when bribery and other political treason was considered a crime,
now it is regarded as a respectable and profitable business.

The courts have always favored those who had economic power, but it is only recently that such favoritism has become so open that no one can avoid seeing it.

The idea that vital economic questions could be settled by means of politics was developed in the long ago when it was really And it is doubtful if anyone, except a political socialist, ever did contend that a revolution can be accomplished by political methods alone.

History gives no indication that any such thing is, or ever was, possible.

THE CONTROL OF PRODUCTION

The Industrial Plutocracy took the control of production away from the political government a good many years ago, and did so despite strenuous efforts on the part of the government to retain that power; and the power of the Industrial Plutocracy has grown rapidly ever since. This means, if it means anything, that it is utterly impossible for the political government ever to take back the power to control production.

The power which controls production also controls the product which sustains society and government; and lawmakers and courts and administrations are helpless against this power. "Public servants" must always be
loyal and faithful servants to the class which can provide or withhold the meal-tickets. The government is not, and never was, and never will be, controlled by mere votes.

The real function of the political state in our day is not to govern anything, but to help the church and the press and the institutions of learning to deceive the great mass of the people.

UNFITNESS OF WORKING CLASS FOR POLITICAL GAME.

But, even if the state were the real government which it was in the past, it would still be useless for us to try to capture it, because the political game is not one that can be studied and mastered in spare time. To really understand politics, we must have a general knowledge of the whole system of production, not only in one locality, but in all parts of the country and in other countries as well; and we must also have a working knowledge of the English language as it is used in laws and legal documents. We can not hope to be successful in politics unless we understand the thousands of laws that have accumulated during the last 125 years, because these laws are the rules and the working parts of the political game. And when we understand the meaning of the laws we must also have a vast knowledge of industrial and geographical conditions before we can know what effect any law will have on the wage-slave class and on the system of production.
That this knowledge is lacking in the working class, and in all the political friends of the working class, is amply demonstrated by the fact that all the laws that have ever been passed with the intention of benefiting labor, have either been side-tracked or been used to the injury of the working class.

It is not enough if we have in our ranks a sufficient number of men who know these things to fill all the political offices. We must all have that knowledge, or we can't choose the competent and reliable men, nor watch them and pass judgment on their actions in office.

As proofs that the socialists lack this knowledge, we need only refer to such laws as have been passed through the activities of socialists who have been elected to office in European countries. These laws never had anything like unanimous approval from the socialists themselves, and are usually condemned by the workers who suffer the "benefits" of such laws. Even if the laws are really good, the mere fact that there can be anything like a general disagreement among the workers regarding such laws, proves my contention that the workers do not know enough about politics to know whether the politician is good or bad.

I have been told that the workers are as intelligent as the capitalists, and could study politics until they knew as much about it. This argument is entirely irrelevant; the capitalists don't need to know anything
about politics; they can hire men who do know, and pay a salary which will insure honest service. The laws that are passed in the interest of the trusts are not written by trust magnates, but by corporation lawyers; the knowledge that is required to determine what effect a law will have, is not contained in the head of the "captain of industry" nor any other man—it is on file in the offices and libraries to which the corporation lawyers have free access.

We can't hire a corporation lawyer and pay him a salary that will insure honesty, and we can't carry a trust office or a congressional library in our roll of blankets. We must accept some other man's opinions about the laws, and this is why we judge a man's fitness for office by the line of bunk he hands out during a political campaign.

HOW POLITICAL DISHONESTY ARISES

Our inability to judge a politician's ability from what we know of his official actions, leads not only to incompetence in office, but also to political dishonesty. If an honest man gets into office and discovers that it is a matter of chance whether his actions are approved or condemned by his constituents, and that he is sure to be applauded by some and censured by others, no matter what his actions may be, he naturally becomes indifferent about remaining in office. It is just as natural that a dishonest politician will take every advantage of this condition to line
his own pockets as long as he possibly can. The political job offers far greater inducements to the man who is crooked than to the one who is straight, and the general crookedness of politics is the logical result.

It may be quite true that the socialists are more competent to judge the actions of the men they elect to office than are the supporters of other parties, but it is only a matter of degree; the fact remains that their judgment is often inaccurate and that socialist parties do make blunders; and some of the socialist politicians become crooked. And this is not the fault of individuals or of parties, but is an inherent characteristic of the political game.

TWO UNIVERSAL FACTS ABOUT POLITICAL PARTIES.

There are two interesting characteristics of political parties which are worthy of mention.

First: All political parties begin as radical parties. They get less radical as soon as they begin to capture political offices, and when they really capture political power they are always conservative. This holds good of all parties that have acquired power, and the socialist parties have followed the same route as far as they have gone.

Second: Political parties are more radical in their public campaign than in their party management, and are always more
conservative in political office than anywhere else.

Anyone who is familiar with the history of the socialist movement can easily satisfy himself that socialist parties are no exception to these rules.

If these laws should continue in effect regarding the socialist party, we may expect to see it getting more conservative, and drawing more and more of the radical element away from the other parties, until it finally gets into power. While getting into power it must, as I will show later, have a fixed program which threatens no immediate danger to big business. The very fact of a socialist party getting into power will convince the capitalists that the older parties are no longer competent to protect the business interests. The property owners must therefore transfer their support to the new party in power in order to protect themselves from the revolutionary movement which must continue to grow outside of the socialist party. The socialist party will thus become the party of a united capitalism, and must protect the interests and solve the problems of capitalism. Whatever sympathy the socialists may have for the workers must evaporate as soon as the workers repudiate the scientific socialist plan of salvation—as soon as the non-political revolutionists attack capitalism in their own way.

We may yet see capitalism protected by a socialist government using all the modern machinery of war against the anarchistic
But let us suppose that the socialist party remains—or becomes—revolutionary. The general election takes place in November; the revolutionary party wins; the end of the profit system is in sight. We know that the capitalists are in business for the sake of profits, and the hope of profits; they produce things to sell, and quit producing (or allowing others to produce for them) when their profits, and the hope of selling the product, are threatened. When revolutionists are elected to office all business men will know that business and profits and buying and selling will end in a few months—as soon as the revolutionists take office; and as soon as they know this they will lose all interest in production, and quit hiring men or paying wages.

This course of action will be dictated by business training and business instinct as well as by the knowledge that the only hope of defeating the (political) revolutionary program is by creating a panic among the workers. Unemployment, starvation, and riot follow in logical sequence; and the capitalists, who are still in office, declare martial law and assert that the election was illegal.

The political revolutionists won’t get anywhere near the seat of political power, and instead of capturing the military power, they will find themselves in front of the guns—or behind prison bars.
I am not speaking about what the economic organization of the working class will do about this; because whatever it will do, or can do, can be done just as well without a political election as with it.

And if, by some miracle, a revolutionary party should win a complete political victory, it would still mean nothing to the working class. The socialist parties everywhere are about equally divided regarding what shall be done with the means of production after the final victory. One part of them wants all the industries to be run by the government—as the postoffice is run today—the other part wants to turn the industries over to the men who work in them, and allow them to manage production without government interference. The most of them avoid discussing this matter in order to maintain harmony, but the matter must be discussed and settled before a decisive victory is won, or the artificially maintained harmony will go a-glimmering when it is time for action.

Both of these programs are based on fundamental errors which make them altogether impossible in practice.

A POLITICAL BUREAUCRACY.

A political government can not control any kind of work except through a bureaucracy of officials. This is not a matter of choice, but of necessity; it is the only possible way to secure efficiency in government work. To establish such a bureaucracy in
all industries would be to build the structure of a new slave society. To assume that the modern proletariat will permit the establishing of a new slave society is to greatly underestimate its intelligence and its desire for freedom.

That the bureaucracy will be responsible to a democratic (or socialistic) government, is not of the slightest importance. For one thing, the will of the people will only reach the industries in a very roundabout way; first through a political government and then through an industrial bureaucracy, and the will of the people will lose in force while on the way.

Then the vast majority of people will help to decide questions about which they are absolutely ignorant; the will and vote of those who know what they are voting about will be swamped by the votes of those who vote ignorantly. Decisions reached by such voting would be a mere matter of chance, and the industrial bureaucracy would be forced to ignore the will of the people and the politicians, or else let the industries become disorganized through popular ignorance.

The other program, that the political party should, as soon as it has captured the political power, turn the control of the industries over to the workers themselves, is taking a good many things for granted. For one thing, it is quite contrary to the known character of politicians to think that they would voluntarily part with any power which may
be placed in their hands. The socialist movement itself has had many unpleasant cases to prove this fact.

**SELF-GOVERNMENT GAINED BY EXPERIENCE.**

But it is of even greater importance to know if the workers are competent to manage production before this power is placed in their hands. Participation in a political campaign is absolutely no evidence that the workers have the ability or training for voluntary co-operation in production. The nations and classes, which in the past have acquired the right of self-government, have demonstrated their ability, and have laid the foundation of their new government while they were struggling for freedom. This program we are speaking of proposes to capture the government and the means of production by means of a political party; and then the industrial control is to be donated to a class which has no experience in voluntary co-operation or self-government. If such a program were put into effect it would be absolutely necessary to have another organization which had taken an active non-political part in the revolution; and the success of the program will be proportional to the part which this non-political organization takes in the revolutionary struggle.

Carrying this reasoning to a logical conclusion, it means there will be the least danger of industrial mismanagement if the non-political organization is allowed to accom-
plish the revolution without political assistance or interference, because that will give the workers the greatest amount of experience in voluntary co-operation and self-government.

ABSURDITY OF REVOLUTION BY LEGAL METHODS.

When we consider the present activity of the socialist parties, we must bear in mind that opposition parties always censure the party in power for failing to enforce the law; this is the gravest charge that can be made against the party in office, and the greatest reason for boosting another party into office. That the socialist party agitates for a revolution makes little difference, as long as it insists that this revolution shall be accomplished in a legal way. Indeed, the very fact that the socialists propose to bring about such sweeping changes by legal methods makes it still more imperative to them that the laws shall be strictly enforced.

This is so true that the socialists have a reputation, even among their enemies, for enforcing the law in places and under conditions where it has never been enforced before. None of the laws were made by or for the working class; a few of the more recent laws were made in the interest of the industrial plutocracy; but the vast mass of the laws were made by and for the present middle class, which was the party in power before the industrial plutocracy took possession of things.
If the laws were made in the interest of the middle class, it naturally follows that this class will be the most deeply interested in having them enforced, and will have the greatest reason to join and support the party which is best able to enforce the law. Being in this party, they naturally use their influence to determine its policy, and to counteract, as much as they can, the revolutionary doctrines which they find objectionable. And the more chance the socialist party has to enforce the law, the more support will it have from the middle class, and the more will the revolutionary doctrine be smothered in middle class politics. The middle class influence in the party must not be measured by mere numbers, nor by intelligence, but rather by the ability to express ideas in suitable words. Lawyers, preachers, and all varieties of business men—how could they ever make a living if they did not have the ability to make people believe that black is white, or at least a very light rose color? And they bring this ability with them into the party; they use it on the platform and in the business meeting; and it is the real measure of their influence in party affairs.

Now, if you will but remember that the two dominant instincts of the middle class are reform and compromise, you will have the key to the whole history of political socialism; as well as a basis for an estimate of what course it will follow in the future.
IS A SOCIALIST PARTY NEEDED TO PROTECT STRIKERS?

The claim is made that socialist politics is necessary to protect striking working men from the brutalities of the military power. If strikers are clubbed by the police we are told that this would not have happened if we had had a socialist mayor. If the clubbing is done by the militia, it is a socialist governor we need; and if the regular army is serving as slugging committee, we are just as much in need of a socialist president. Leaving aside the rather doubtful question whether a socialist mayor, or governor, or president could prevent the use of the military power in case of a strike, I will merely point out that it is a president we need in all these cases. The governor can order the militia to act whenever a mayor refuses to use the police; and the president can order out the regular army if a governor fails to repress a strike with the militia. We should therefore always elect a socialist president before we declare a strike.

Those who use this argument in favor of political action know full well that there are not enough revolutionists in city or state or country to elect a revolutionary mayor, or governor, or president. And they should know that if a majority of the people were revolutionists, neither mayors, nor governors, nor presidents would be so foolish as to try to suppress a strike by military brutality.
In Italy, the unions—with a membership of less than 200,000—forced the government to discontinue using the army in strikes. In France, where the unions have about 400,000 members, the army is honey-combed with revolutionists who would refuse to fight, or to intimidate, striking working-men. Even if all these union men in Italy and France had a political vote, which they have not, they still would not be numerous enough to elect any important officials.

Few in numbers as the revolutionary unionists are in this country, the capitalist government was forced to investigate the military brutalities that occurred in Lawrence, Mass., because the capitalists themselves are beginning to realize that such tactics will injure their class interests by spreading and intensifying discontent, and by undermining the patriotism and loyalty of the militia and the army.

**IS A POLITICAL PARTY NECESSARY TO EDUCATE WORKERS?**

But when the political socialist has lost all faith in political action he will still justify the socialist parties on the ground that they carry on a great educational propaganda. We will investigate this claim a little.

The socialist parties teach that the workers are exploited, and that the condition of the working class is bad and is rapidly getting worse. They teach theories of economics and of sociology; and they teach that the
laws are made and interpreted and enforced in the interest of the ruling class. These things are true, and it is very important that the working class should know they are true; but all these things can be taught, and are being taught, by organizations which make no pretense of being political parties.

The only part of the socialist agitation that makes it necessary to organize as a political party, or that can possibly justify such organization, is the claim that the working class can escape from wage slavery by voting the socialist ticket and contributing to the socialist campaign fund; and this part of the agitation is entirely false.

**EVIL OF MISEDUCATION.**

Up to the present I have merely tried to show that the proletarian revolution can not be accomplished by, or through, a political party, and that the workers have little or nothing to gain by taking active part in the political game. If this were all, it might still be said that I should not attack it, that I may be wrong in my beliefs, and that those who believe in revolutionary politics may be right. But I think I can demonstrate that political agitation is extremely harmful to the revolutionary movement.

When a wage slave begins to understand that he is being exploited by parasites that are of no use to society, and that it may be possible to stop this process of exploitation, he is naturally inclined to join and support
any movement which claims to be organized for this purpose. Once in such an organiza-
tion, he will naturally accept without ques-
tion a number of ideas and theories which he is as yet unable to clearly understand, especially if these theories correspond with what he has been taught in earlier life.

Almost everyone has been taught that politics is a cure for many of the ills of soci-
ety, and is therefore more ready to believe that politics is a cure for all social ills, than that it is a worthless quack medicine. And, the more firmly a man believes in this politi-
cal quackery, the less interest will he have in any other movement he may hear of. Therefore, once a member of a political party, he is likely to remain in it and give it all the support he can until he is sufficiently familiar with the political theory to see the flaws in it. All this time he is helping to maintain the organization which is leading other workers into this political blind alley. In this way a great deal of money and energy is actually used to divide the workers when it should be used to bring the workers to-
gether.

A large part of the socialist agitation is carried on by speakers and writers who have very different ideas on many sub-
jects, and are still acceptable to the party, because their ideas do not conflict with the political attitude of the organization. Thus, a Socialist Party speaker may express de-
cidedly reactionary ideas about unionism from a socialist platform, and get well paid
for doing so; he may spend the greater part of his time in separating the workers into purely artificial craft unions, and yet be considered a valuable member of the party; not to mention his chance of being nominated for political office on the socialist ticket.

Many socialist writers and speakers and editors have been so far misled by their political faith as to misrepresent the theories and tactics of Industrial Unionism, and to slander the members and officials of the I. W. W., and all members of the socialist party contribute to the support of these speakers and writers.

POLITICAL EXPLOITATION OF STRUGGLING WORKERS

But worse than this is the political activity in a strike. Some of the politicians, while speaking to striking workers, and after they have gained the ear of the audience by speaking of the strike, will proceed to explain in their own way that nothing is to be gained by striking, but that everything is to be gained by voting the socialist ticket. This naturally puts a damper on the enthusiasm of the strikers, and the weak-kneed ones will be anxious to get back to work on any terms.

Another pernicious result of the political agitation is to make striking working men hopeful that the government will force the employers to come to terms. The government never tries to settle a strike until the employers are forced to give in, and the
function of the government is to swindle the workers out of a victory which has been won. This has been done so often that everyone ought to expect it, yet the socialists are always clamoring for government investigation and government interference whenever a serious strike occurs. The big strike in Sweden in 1909 was broken in just this way. The secretary of the organization—who is also active in the political party—was so anxious to have government interference that he ordered a large part of the strikers back to work at the request of a government official, whereupon the government proceeded to arbitrate the strike to the entire satisfaction of the employers. The strike was broken as soon as part of the strikers were sent back to work.

This attitude of the political socialists is quite consistent with the political teaching. Believing that the government can be used for the protection of the workers, they naturally censure the politicians in office for failing to give such protection; and the criticism against the party in power is the more fervent and emphatic because it may mean the election of a few more socialists to office at the next election.

DOES RAISE IN WAGES MEAN INCREASED COST IN LIVING?

Many socialist orators take the position that a raise in wages will not benefit the workers, because it is sure to be followed
by a corresponding increase in the cost of living. This is a perversion of socialist economics and is known as such by all well-informed socialists, yet it is quite common to hear it as a regular part of the socialist propaganda.

The real fact is that the would-be economists have the facts turned the wrong way. A raise of wages does not cause a rise in the cost of living, although an increase in the cost of living may reduce the purchasing power of the workers' wages, so that they are forced to demand more wages to keep them from starving to death.

Both wages and prices have appeared to go up during the last ten years, and this has given rise to a great mass of muddled economics among those who do not understand that the value of gold—and of money made of gold, or redeemable in gold—is subject to the same kind of changes as the value of potatoes, or shoes, or labor power, or any other commodity.

The supply of gold has been increased to an enormous extent during the last ten or fifteen years, not only by the discovery of new gold mines, but more so by the new processes of mining which have made it profitable to work many of the mines that could not be worked with any advantage a few years ago, and the value of gold, in bullion or in coins, has decreased in proportion as the cost of mining a given quantity of gold has been reduced.
So that what has taken place in recent years is not a raise in wages nor an increase in the cost of living, but a great reduction in the value of gold. The only reason this is not generally understood, is because we are accustomed to count values in terms of gold (in dollars and cents) and we therefore think of gold as an unchangeable measure of value.

It is a recognized economic law that the value of a commodity is determined by the amount of labor required for its production, this law applies to the value of gold as much as to the value of any other commodity. If a pair of shoes is valued at $5.00 it means that it requires as much labor to produce a $5.00 gold piece, as is required to produce a pair of that grade of shoes. The wages of shoe workers or of miners do not affect the rate of exchange between shoes and gold.

But if you should insist that an increase in the wages of shoe workers would cause a corresponding increase in the value of shoes, then you must admit that an increase in the wages of gold miners would have the same tendency to increase the value of gold. According to that theory, a 20 per cent increase in the wages of shoe workers would cause a 20 per cent increase in the price of shoes, and the shoes which formerly sold for $5.00 would now be worth $6.00; but if the gold miners also got a 20 per cent raise, then the value of gold would also be raised 20 per cent, and the shoes would again be valued at $5.00, although the value of both shoes and
gold would have increased 20 per cent, when compared with other commodities; that is, $5.00 would buy 20 per cent more of everything, except shoes, than it would before. But if the 20 per cent raise should take place in all industries it would mean a 20 per cent increase in the value of all commodities, including gold; but that would be an absurdity, because you would have nothing with which to measure such increase; your standard of value (gold), which is also the measure of wages, would have increased with the values it should measure. If the raise of wages should take place in only one industry, it would cause a temporary increase in the price of the product of that industry, but a re-adjustment would follow; first, because a raise of wages in one industry will encourage the workers in other industries to demand a similar increase; and second, because the competition in the labor market would shift the more competent labor to the place where the raise of wages took place.

If the political economists of the socialist party do not know this, then they are ignorant of, and incompetent to teach, their own school of economics; if they do know, and still preach that a raise of wages will increase the cost of living—or allow any one else to preach it from their platforms—then they sacrifice truth for the sake of votes, and thereby forfeit all claim to the confidence of the working class.

It is evident that unionism would be of no immediate value to the workers if a raise of
wages could be nullified in any such way, and, as the revolutionary unions recruit from socialist parties, we may regard this perversion of socialist economics as a measure of self-protection.

WAGE-SLAVERY DUE TO RESPECT FOR LAWS OF MASTER CLASS.

The root of all the false positions of the political socialists is found in the statement that the exploitation of wage labor is due to the private ownership of the means of production and distribution. In one sense this statement is quite true; but, if you regard ownership as a mere matter of laws and legal titles, then it is absolutely false; and judged by their whole activity, this is exactly what the political socialists mean by ownership.

To understand this matter of ownership clearly, we must know something about the origin and nature of law.

We find traces of law in the most ancient history, and these laws were not made arbitrarily, but were the products of experience. For example: if a man was killed, his friends and relatives would try to retaliate; this was a quite natural action, which had a strong tendency to protect society by checking the inclination to kill, but this first retaliation would often lead to retaliations from the other side and the result would be a feud. The tribe or commune could not afford to protect the murderer because that would
tend to make murders more numerous, but it was found that an agreement or law to the effect that the penalty or retaliation should be subject to certain conditions and formalities, would in a measure prevent secondary retaliations and feuds. Men would protect such property as they had, as they would their lives; this was because the property of that time consisted of the simple things that were necessary to maintain life; and to steal these was to take, or at least to endanger, life. Society found it necessary to make a law fixing the penalty for theft. As the tribes and communes grew larger, still other laws were added.

It will be understood: first, that all these laws were made by the people themselves; second, that these laws were quite consistent with the natural instincts of the people; and third, that these laws were respected, not merely because they were laws, but because the conditions maintained through these laws were necessary to the welfare of society.

It was only when slavery was introduced that the lawmaking power was entrusted to some particular part of the people.

Since then lawmaking has gradually grown into a trade or profession, and this trade has been practiced by slave owners, feudal barons, kings and capitalists, but always by the ruling class. Sometimes laws were made which were of benefit to all members of society; but all the laws served to protect the interests of those who made the laws and of the master class in general.
The greater part of the laws made by the professional law makers of the capitalist regime relate to property, and the greater part of these property laws are made solely in the interest of the property owners.

Regarding the laws we have today, we must observe: first, that none of them were made by the people themselves; second, that the laws are often quite contrary to natural human instincts and inclinations; and third, that we obey these laws because we have been carefully trained to do so; because we have been taught that we could not live together without them, and because the ruling class will enforce these laws with jails and penitentiaries and military power.

CONCEPTION OF "JUSTICE" PRODUCT OF CAPITALIST LAWS.

Generally speaking, laws were never due to any sense of justice. It is doubtful if primitive people had any conception of justice; their laws were made simply because they were necessary. The professional law-makers of all the slave societies that have existed since then have been dominated by class interests and class instincts. If someone who had ideas of justice did get into the law-making profession occasionally, he usually got out of it again quickly.

Our conception of justice is a by-product of the law-making machinery; our ideas of
justice were patterned after the laws were made, and then stuffed into the heads of the slave class by preachers and teachers appointed for that job. The conception we call "justice" is in no way a product of the instincts and experiences of the slave class.

Therefore, while ownership is a matter of law, it is also, like the law, a matter of class interests; and while the slave class respects the ownership because it is legal, this respect for law and legal ownership is itself a product of the teaching and training we have had in the past. In a sense, it is true that we allow ourselves to be exploited by our employer because he legally owns the tools we use; but the real truth, the important truth, is that we would not pay the slightest attention to this legal ownership, or the law on which it is based, if our instincts and our intelligence had not been perverted by the teaching and training we have received from the tools of the master class.

If you tell me that we must obey the law because it is backed up and enforced by the military power, I reply that the military power itself cannot exist without discipline, and this discipline is another form of the same habitual respect for law and the same pernicious teaching and training.

We see then that the law, and everything that is based on law, gets its force from the fact that the slave class has been taught and trained to tolerate and respect and obey all kinds of law—just because it is law.
The political socialists point out certain laws which they say are bad and must be repealed or changed, but the repealing and changing of law must be done in a legal manner. But laws can not be changed in a legal manner, unless the legal machinery in general remains in full force. The socialists must therefore preach and practice respect for laws and legal institutions, in order that they may get a chance to repeal legally the laws to which they object. And this is exactly the position the socialists take, if not always in words, at least in their actions and in their attitude towards all the other social factors.

THE REVOLUTIONARY ATTITUDE TOWARD LAWS.

If this attitude should be accepted by the working class in general it would mean that the whole class must get busy separating good laws from bad ones, much as you might sort a barrel of apples which is beginning to rot, and we should have a universal gab-fest to decide how many rotten spots a law may have before it is classed as legal garbage.

This places the political socialists, and all their followers and supporters, directly in opposition to that part of the revolutionary proletariat which insists that all laws are class laws and can be of no benefit to the slave class, and are therefore entitled to neither respect nor support from the slave class.
Political socialism helps the master class to instill in the working class mind that respect for law which makes military discipline and military power possible, and which is the vital principle in every institution that serves to protect the master class and keep the slave class in subjection.
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