THE
Political Economy of Jesus

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"FREE LOVE AND SOCIALISM."
"SOCIALISM IN ACTION."
ETC.

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INTRODUCTION.

This is the third time I have published a booklet under the title "The Political Economy of Jesus". The first was a published essay delivered in Omaha, Nebr., in 1900. It was an ambitious attempt to deal with a great subject.

At that time my field of reference as to the economic character of primitive Christianity was very limited, and of course, the product was very crude. The pamphlet, however, had a surprisingly ready sale which opened my eyes to the fact of the great popular interest in the subject.

Later while on the editorial staff of the Appeal to Reason, Ward's "Ancient Lowly", a two-volume treatise on the working-class in the time of the Roman Empire was published, and I read through its 1200 pages with a feverish interest. The researches of this tireless archaeologist offered a mine of rich material to the student. The book was crudely put together, and sometimes inaccurate, but for the most part is reliable.

Renan, a great French writer, who spent years of his life in the study of primitive Christianity, had given us a "Life of Jesus" which was helpful to the writer. About the same time a volume appeared from the pen of Prof. Nitti of the University of Naples, Italy, entitled "Catholic Socialism". This book gave a summary of the writings of the Fathers of the church (2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries) on the subject of property. Of course I had access to Gibbon's "Christianity", but that author was so unfriendly to the Christian religion that his writings on this subject are of little value, being exceedingly biased and unfair.

With the aid of the above books and the Bible itself, I wrote my second "Political Economy of Jesus" which ran through many editions and several translations, to a sale of a quarter of a million.

In the eight years since publishing the second book, I have read many thousands of pages dealing with the history of the Church and now a very remarkable book has appeared, —Bouck White's "The Call of the Carpenter". If you want a word picture of Jesus of Nazareth and Paul of Tarsus as they probably were, you MUST read this new book.
The present booklet is, in my judgment, an improvement over that in 1903. Its conclusions are better buttressed with facts and it is more complete in that it gives the economics of Moses and of the Jewish religion, as well as of Jesus. These are subjects every Socialist and indeed every lover of truth should understand. Of course, I cannot deal at length in a pamphlet but I have told you where I got my information and this will enable you to pursue the subject as you wish.

For the present I invite you to go with me through the pages of this book in a study of the economics of the Bible. I shall show you that both the Old Testament, so-called, and the New, with the exception of Paul's writings, deal with economics. The Jewish religion had its foundation in economics and the first concern of Moses was to establish a nation where his people might enjoy the blessings of peace, equality and prosperity. These were the ideals of the Jewish people. However much justice may have been bound by the ruling class and the priesthood, I shall undertake to show you that Jesus Christ had for his objective a new social and religious system, taking the ideals of the old or Jewish religion and enlarging the boundaries to include all races and both sexes. A careful reading of the Gospels will show you that what Jesus had to say about Heaven could be written on the palm of your hand, and that nearly all of his utterances had to do with social and economic relations. I shall show you that Jesus inaugurated a revolution which thundered at the gates of Rome for nearly three centuries and how this same revolution was cunningly turned aside by the Roman Government, which at first tried in vain to crush it by oppression. Failing in this it finally annexed Christianity by a compact entered into between the Christian Bishops, the Emperor and the ruling class, and that the Bishops in return for the spoils of ecclesiastical office and power, turned the Church into a channel of oppression instead of a means of revolution.

If you will go with me over the road of history, ignoring the dreary waste of scenery we will see along the way, only observing a few things here and there, you will then understand how the religion of the humble Christ who lived and died a peasant, eating the bread and sharing the hospitality of the lowly, finally after three centuries of protest, became the religion of the powerful, absolutely controlled by the priest and potentate. You will then understand the Dark Ages better. Having fallen into the hands of the ruling class in the 4th century, the Christian church became from that hour a protector and promoter of whatever form of exploita-
tion the privileged class undertook. You will see it supporting
the feudal lords in the days of feudalism, the slave masters
in the days of chattel slavery and now the capitalist class in
the days of wage slavery.

The church did for Constantine, the Roman Emperor,
just what he expected it to do—subdued the people and
brought the Christians into his army, and it has been doing
the same thing for aristocracy and capitalism ever since. You
will read in this, one reason why the people through the ages
have submitted to oppression and robbery and so seldom
rebelled.

So far in the history of organized government the num-
berically small class have always been masters, (governors),
while all the time the oppressed have formed the vast major-
ity. Why have the slaves, serfs and exploited workers so
seldom rebelled? Is it because they have been awed by the
sword? No doubt the weapon of blood has played its part in
keeping the lowly in subjection, but that alone would have
proven powerless to protect the cruel masters from tormented
slaves. No fact in history is plainer than that the humble
have ever, in part at least, consented to be robbed, beaten
and enslaved.

What has enthralled the race? What power has held
sway over the humble mind, gaining its consent to its own
slavery? There is but one answer—religious superstition.

The slave and worker have cunningly been taught by the
priest of their religion that God has created kings, to which
the subject holds allegiance; masters, whom servants must
obey; states, against whose power there must be no resistance.
The priests of all religions have posed as mediators between
God and man. The priest, therefore, became an oracle, a
person whose advice must be taken, for it came from God, or
the Gods. But the priest was a man with all of a man's
selfishness and proclivities. The king was likewise a man.
The king and the priest became friends—partners. Govern-
ment and ecclesiasticism were early joined and have never
been long separated. The king, or the state, robs the priest,
frees his possessions from taxation, and lavishes upon him
the favors of power, in return for which the priest keeps the
people from rebellion, promising them bliss in some future
state, as a reward for their suffering, and threatening the dis-
obedient with the wrath of the Gods.

So long as man believes the priest he will obey despotism,
and so long as he obeys despotism he will believe the priest.
The church and the state have ever leaned against and sustained one another. Remove the power of one and the other topples over.

In this present day we see on the one hand vast mountains of wealth on which are perched the kings of finance, and on the other, great valleys of poverty, where the millions are in suffering, vice and degradation. In the midst of all this we witness the church preaching and teaching the absurd doctrine of the fatherhood of God over all these vast inequalities and the brotherhood of man between the master and his slave. At the same time, we witness a steady falling away from the Church, of the working-masses. To-day we see the frantic attempt of the exploiting classes to organize movements such as the Men and Religion Forward Movement for the benefit (?) of the workers, and we readily understand the motive behind it all. Finally, before we are done, we shall see that the Church is not preaching the same Christ who went to the Cross of Calvary and that any attempt on the part of the modern preacher to preach the Gospel of the Nazarene Carpenter ends with a request from his deacons to resign. We shall understand why people become very indifferent to the Church when they come to know the actual facts.

We shall begin to understand that the Church needs Christianizing and that if it does not speedily become Christianized, that the common people will in yet greater numbers leave its fold. This does not mean that they will desert the standard of the Nazarene—not by any means—for the ideals of Socialism and the ideals of Christ are compatible. Jesus was crucified, according to the gospel accounts, because he was a stirrer up of the people. He was a revolutionist, bold and vehement. He was an uncompromising as truth and in all the ages no man has ever spoken for the slaves and the outcasts with the boldness and power of Jesus. He belongs to us, and it is one of our purposes to rescue His name from those who have dragged it through the slimy ways of superstition, and used it to bind burdens on the people.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM OF THE JEWS.

Josephus, the great Jewish historian says that Moses wrote the history of the Jews according to the traditions of his people. Moses is the greatest historical figure of the Jewish nation, before the advent of Jesus Christ. It was he who successfully lead an exodus of his people, who were in slavery.
in the land of Egypt, across a wilderness and a desert and
introduced them to the land of Palestine. This latter country
became their future home and here they grew into a great
and powerful people though occupying a small area of country
and not numerous as we measure nations.

I think the Jews are of first importance in studying the
history of the world because they laid the foundation of the
Christian religion.

Moses was the founder of this nation and gave it its
laws,—at least such are the traditions of the Jews. The first
question dealt with in an economic way was the land, for after
conquering or driving out the native inhabitants, the land was
divided. Under the Mosaic system, the land was considered
as belonging to God, and it never was and never could be
under the Jewish law, privately owned. The title was vested
in God, but the land was parcelled out for use among the
tribes, and then by the tribes divided among the people.
Each householder drew land according to his property which
consisted of animals, wives and slaves, for Jewish history be-
gins with both polygamy and slavery. It is clear, however, that
Moses intended the abolition of slavery among his own people
for he provided that at the end of six years the slaves should
be free, unless they chose to remain longer in servitude.

A system of checks against monopoly by the well-to-do,
was provided for. As a final safe-guard, it was made oblig-
atory that the land be redivided every 50 years. No Jew could
be permanently separated from the land under the law. If
he were poor, his property, his tools, his capital could not be
 kept overnight. The law by its institutions defended the fath-
erless, the widow, the hireling, the poor and the oppressed.
The taking of interest for money was prohibited. The word
“usury” which means unlawful interest now, originally meant
any interest whatever. This referred, however only to the
Jews. A Jew might take interest from a gentile but not from
a Jew. The government of the Jews was half theocratic and
half democratic. The Jews were in all things first to be
obedient to God, who according to their beliefs had spoken
to them through their ten commandments and Moses their
prophet, and who would raise up for their guidance other
prophets. These prophets were believed to be in frequent
communication with God and could therefore at all times
settle questions of policy.
The Jewish system of administering justice was vested in administrators or judges who were chosen at a popular meeting and sworn in at first by Moses. The qualifications of these officers are recorded in Exodus 18th Chapter as follows:

“Take your wise men, ‘men of understanding’ among your tribe, ‘men of reputation’ and I will make them rulers over you”. Appeals from their decision were at first to Moses, afterwards to the priest at the holy place. (Deut. 17: 8 to 13.) In the same Chapter 16-18-19 we have the law laid down for these judges as follows: “Thou shalt not wrest justice, thou shalt not respect persons, neither shalt thou take a bribe, for a bribe doth blind the eyes of the wise and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow.”

Afterwards this system was supplemented by the election of supreme judges or senators, seventy in number, who were at the first to be special assistants to Moses. The qualifications were that they were to be known to the elders and that they before that, had been selected for some public trust. There was also what corresponds to our circuit court established in the larger cities. This body was twenty-three in number. If you will read the twenty-first chapter of Exodus you will get a clear idea of how Moses always had the protection of the poor and the laboring people in his mind and sought to safeguard their rights. In this modern day when we are making such strenuous efforts to pass workmen’s compensation laws it is refreshing to read how Moses sought to protect the body from injury by man or beast and provided for a compensation in all cases and punishment for the gravest offenses. He required the man who was guilty of assault and battery to pay the man he injured for the loss of time and his doctor bill until he was completely recovered. In these days we pay a policeman to arrest the assaultor, a judge and jury to try him. We fine the prisoner and the fine goes to the state, or we put the man in jail to lay out his fine at a fixed per diem while his wife and family receive nothing but the contempt of the community.

The system of punishment inaugurated by Moses was “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”—in other words inflicting on the one to be punished so near as possible a penalty like and equal to his crime. We must bear this in mind because in future chapters we shall see how Jesus preached the abolition of this system and the substitution of mercy and kindness to the criminal.
Under the Mosaic system two tax levies were made on the people,—the first a poll tax which was designed to be very light and consisted of half a shekel which was for the sustaining of the sanctuary. In addition to this a tithe, or one-tenth of the increase of the flocks, the vineyards, and the fields was to be held sacred as belonging to God who was the landlord and the owner of the soil. This was not properly a tax but a system of rent. These tithes were for the support of the priesthood and the various officials of the church to whom were allotted no land. Moses not only explained these laws to his people but he wrote them down in the “book of laws” and with this clear understanding and these plain directions of what they were to do, the Jews under Joshua crossed the Jordan river into their home to be, and with sword and spear, fell on the poor luckless inhabitants of the country and either drove them out, killed them or put them in slavery.

Having subdued the land, the people settled down to peace and prosperity. They got along for a long time very nicely and grew in wealth and numbers. However, the Jews were always a proud people and wonderfully aggressive. Their laws were a check on ambition. They were not satisfied with being a peaceful people and they looked around on the surrounding nations with a love for conquest.

It was at least thus among their leaders, for it is only with the ambitious and powerful that history deals. I can imagine that some of them who had amassed more wealth than the others, even with the check that Moses provided, chafed under the restraint of their laws. They wanted to go to war. They wanted the pomp and power of monarchy; hence they clamored for a king. Samuel, the prophet of God, was sought, who, after a session with the Deity, announced that God was against the plan. The book records only one instance of this kind, but I imagine, if the truth were known, it occurred a good many times, until it became unsafe for a prophet to declare what he honestly believed. At last the prophet said that God would permit them to choose a king, but he warned them that no sooner would the king start business than the choicest young men would be drafted to run before his chariots and the flower of the maidenhood of the kingdom would be brought to his palace as servants. Monarchy is a gaudy thing to look at, but the price which people pay for it is denominated by human life, virtue, and suffering. Under the king, the people soon departed from the laws of Moses. With the advent of the king came the plutocracy, the landlords, and the military despots. The history of the Jewish people from
the time of David to the time of the last fall of the temple after the death of Christ can be summed up in wars, treasons, debaucheries, cruelties and destructions. The priesthood soon became corrupt, and it had sunk to so low a level that when Jesus Christ preached in Jerusalem the temple had become a resort of gamblers and adulterers. The High Priests consorted with the Roman Government and were the identical agents through which the Roman power kept the Jews in subjection, just as has so often been repeated under Christianity.

At the advent of Jesus, the Roman nation had conquered the world. No better view of Roman rule has ever been portrayed in words than that given by Bouck White in his "Call of the Carpenter." We quote:

"The Roman Empire was a confederation of aristocrats for the perpetuation of human servitude. Economic exploitation was the end in view of the organizing purposes throughout. Patriotism, racial inheritance, ancestral literatures, the arts and worship of the peoples—Rome cared for none of these things. For her portion, she chose the pot of gold. The Romans' one object was revenue. In the countries of the ancient world, even before the formation of the empire, slavery was the basis of society. In each was a capitalist class and a slave class. The capitalists were constantly in fear of a slave insurrection. The dread clouded their sunshine by day and nightmared their sleep, for they saw piled up against them a discontent hell deep and heaven high. Hereupon Rome appeared with her proposal of a world wide confederation of the capitalist class against this restive proletarianism. Hereby they could pool their separate armies into a military unit and hurl its weight against a popular uprising in any of the countries. The proposal was hailed with joy and the concordat with the exploiters of every country was drawn up."

"The Roman Empire was the result. The Roman Empire was the 'system' at work in the ancient world. She did not conquer the nations; she annexed them by means of a coalition of the local capitalist group in each."

Now in Palestine the local capitalist group consisted of priests principally, and it was the priests who entered into partnership with the Roman Government for the joint exploitation of the people. All labor and industry was robbed to the last farthing, just as were the poor workers of all the countries over which Rome ruled. But in all her possessions, Rome had not so much trouble in keeping the people in subjection as in Palestine. The reason was that the Jews were patriotic
and democratic. Every Jew could claim Abraham as his father and that made him the equal of every other Jew. Liberty was taken from the people, but it was never crushed out of their hearts—that is, the common people—and nowhere in Palestine were the fires of liberty more unquenched than in Galilee. It was a time of great oppression, misery and suffering.

It must not be forgotten that all the Jews had access to their Bible at least on the Sabbath, when it was read in the Synagogue. The spirit of this old Bible is one of liberty and democracy, and under its inspiration prophet after prophet preached with tremendous power against the prevailing economic sins. Always have the poor had a champion. You can read between the lines—yea, you can read the very lines themselves in the Jewish Bible that tell this story. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Malachi, who were these, but the expositors of freedom, the voices of the common people, condemning the rich for their injustices, the priests for their profligacies. The prophets were ever the champions of the people, from Isaiah to Jesus. No voice for freedom ever rose from the priestly temple at Jerusalem—always it was from the hills and the simple walks of life. So it will ever be. Changes in the social order do not come from the top down, but from the bottom up. The Jews were the hardest race to conquer the world ever knew, largely because their religion was based on equality and democracy. Today the hardest fighters for democracy, for freedom, for Socialism, in the big wide world, are the Jews.

CHAPTER II.

THE WORKING CLASS AT THE TIME OF JESUS.

Before entering on a critical analysis of the life and teachings of Jesus, it is essential that we know something of the condition of the working class under the Roman rule at the time of his advent, so that we may be able to intelligently interpret his remarkable career and those of those whom he chose to plant his "way" in the soils of the earth—the leaven in the measure of meal—where it would some day permeate the whole.

Man has inhabited the earth for a much longer period than is generally supposed. Ancient history is a difficult thing to unravel. Its most reliable records begin with Greece and Rome, which, under the name of the Roman Empire, had at the time of Jesus extended over that portion of the earth
comprising Southern Europe, Western Asia and Northern Africa. Over this strip of earth were fought the great battles of ancient history, and from Greece, Rome and Judea have come the profoundest philosophy, the purest literature and the noblest religious conceptions that the ages have bequeathed to man. Here, amid the despotism of Rome, surrounded by pagan superstition and abject slavery, there came a man with a philosophy of freedom so sweeping as to include all races, both sexes, and extending down to the lowest outcasts of society.

Unless you understand the workingman and the slave of that time, you will not understand the message of Jesus, but it is not an easy matter to reproduce the picture, for the historians of the world have not written the annals of the poor. History is a record of the achievements of the world's rulers. Historians have been noted flatterers, setting down those things which have been pleasing and acceptable to the ruling class—omitting criticism. In the age of which we speak there were no movable types or printing presses. Records were kept on manuscripts or scrolls, which were recopied when the originals began to wear out. In recopying, changes were made to suit the whims of the copyist or often at the command of the ruling powers. It is known to a certainty that during the third and fourth centuries there was a wholesale destruction and mutilation of historical records, particularly those relating to Jesus and the early Christians. It was necessary to do this in order to supply the basis for an institutional church.

During the time of the greatness of Greece and Rome the workers were permitted to organize into unions. These unions built temples, on whose walls they chiselled their records. Later, when the government undertook to suppress their unions, the members removed their meeting places to caverns and tombs, where they continued to chisel their records in the rocks. When finally the Roman emperors endeavored to blot out unionism and, incidentally, Christianity, it was necessary sometimes to murder the inhabitants of entire cities. The secrets of the unions died with the members, but the caves and tombs, with their telltale records and inscriptions, remained to sometime give the lie to the history written under the authority of the church and state.

It took hundreds of years before a prying science went with pick and shovel and dug into the ruins of these ancient tombs and brought to light that which enables us to see Jesus and the early Christians as they were and uncovers the
monstrous fraud which, in the name of Christ, institutionalism has perpetrated on Society, helping thereby to bind the race in economic servitude to the feudalism of the middle ages and the capitalism of the present.

We owe to C. Osborne Ward of the United States Department of Labor the credit for two volumes of 1200 pages which is a compilation of the discoveries of the archaeologists, carefully pieced together. Hidden away in tombs, parchments ages old have been found. Ancient temples have been opened, caverns deep in the earth—the hiding places of primitive Christians and unions—have been entered and there silent witnesses of the past have given their testimony. The books which record and interpret these findings are termed the "Ancient Lowly," and from their pages we take the following statements:

"1. The existence of trades unions, having a legal foundation in the jus-coendi of Solon, or the law of combination. Some of these were very ancient, there being good reason to believe that they were at the time of Jesus hundreds of years old and that some of them were also of an international form.

2. Relics found in Pompeii and other places prove that they were permitted to vote for commissioners of public works, and that they used the franchise to elect to office men who would favor them in public contracts. It must be remembered, however, that in the main the working class could not elect their own members, but were compelled to vote for representatives of the aristocracy. In our day the working class has not only the franchise, but may elect its own class representatives to the control of government. It does not use this power, and because this is true the working class are everywhere met with the army and the courts, two functions which could be controlled did the workers possess a pittance of political sense.

"3. It was a part of the work of their unions to purchase the freedom of slaves, many of whom were members.

"4. They all practiced communism. Each paid into the common treasury a stipulated amount in the form of dues, which was expended by the deacons who purchased goods in large quantities direct from the producer. We find here the origin of the word 'deacon,' used even to-day in Christian churches. The practice of buying direct from the producers greatly angered the merchant class, who used their own organization in bringing influence to bear on the government
looking to the suppression of the unions. I presume these merchants were the prototypes of the Citizens’ Alliances and the National Manufacturing Associations of the present time.

“5. The union had a chief officer, called the Kurios (President), sometimes the Lord. He it was who took all contracts for the union and was the responsible party for their execution. The place where the unions met was called a ‘house.’ So the president of the union was the Lord of the House. This makes plain many statements in the Acts and the Gospels, where mention is made, for instance, of stopping at the ‘house’ of Simon the tanner. We know now that Simon was the Kurios, or president of his union. In the house was spread the common table, where the members of each partook in brotherly love of the food purchased by their officers.”

Under the reign of Tiberius, Roman emperor at the time of the active life of Jesus, ancient unionism had reached the zenith of its power. It had come to be a positive menace to the empire. It was controlling all avenues of trade and commerce. Union sailors carried the freight from distant lands. Union iron, steel and bronze workers made the arms for the soldiers. Bread was baked in union bakeries; food raised by union tillers of the soil. Perhaps the greatest union of all was that of the stage players and musicians, numbering many thousands and extending into every province and city. Undoubted evidence exists that this union was international, with a central headquarters, and that its members were journey-men, traveling from place to place and stopping at the “house” and living at the common table.

The unions were all religious in character, each trade recognizing some one of the many gods of Paganism. It must be understood, however, that the Pagan religion took little notice of the humble worker and slave. It was a common conception of the times that only the aristocratic born were immortal. The princes of the blood were supposed be descended from the gods and their immortality was assured. The slave was held to be on a par with the animal. Although he was permitted to select a female companion, the law did not recognize the union, and the legalized family was unknown among the slaves and outcasts. The worker had no protection under the law unless a citizen of the empire, and the percentage of citizens was insignificant. Certain rights were granted by the laws of Solon and Numa to the unions as a collective body. Because of this the poor worker regarded his union above all things else.
It was a common belief that a savior would sometime come to redeem the workers from their galling chains of slavery and oppression. The Pagan gods had never rendered any help and the temples were only places where tribute was exacted from them in the high prices of the birds and animals sold for sacrifices. The government received a percentage from the sales of these sacrificial animals, the priests getting the balance.

To the principle of communism, or the common table, they clung tenaciously, and when the influence of the merchant class secured restrictions against this mode of life in order to compel the unions to buy as individuals, they went down into the bowels of the earth and still kept the common table. This was one of their most prized rights under the laws of Solon and Numa. By thus combining their scanty earnings much of the bitterness of poverty was averted and they practiced communism for centuries before Jesus. Jesus and the early Christians, therefore, did not establish communism. They adopted it from the unions as the only possible way by which the Golden rule and the principle of equality could be established and maintained.

Concerning Jesus and primitive Christianity the researches of archaeologists also prove:

1. That the commonly accepted church history of Jesus is largely a fabrication, skillfully woven to deceive the innocent and credulous; but which must give way before facts which cannot be disputed.

2. That the Christianity that is taught and practiced at the present time is wholly a matter of theology and salvation in a world to come, while that of the primitive Christians was at least two-fold, a salvation of the soul and a system of social economy, whereby man could love his brother, need take no thought for the morrow, and could go on his evangelizing tours without scrip or price. All of the twelve disciples save Judas and John were murdered by the state for economic rather than theological reasons.

3. That the Christian church, which as an institution was founded permanently under Constantine in the fourth century, stifled the communism of the Christians, discarded from Christian history and its literature nearly all of its vital economic features and established a religious despotism, after which came the dark ages. Unionism was destroyed along with the communism of the Christians, for they had become identical, or nearly so.
4. That records further prove that Jesus was an apostle of the working class, and that if he himself was not a part of the organized labor movement, his disciples were, and that for three hundred years the labor unions were the avenues through which the gospel was preached.

Finally, these records show that women were received in full membership with men, both in the unions and the Christian societies, and that they were both voting and office-holding members.

CHAPTER III.

JESUS THE NAZARENE CARPENTER.

The various “Lives of Jesus Christ” extant are but little more than the product of the imaginative minds of the authors. There is no material outside the Gospels themselves from which to write a Life of Jesus. Josephus, the Jewish historian, dismisses him with a paragraph, and I may add that the authenticity of that paragraph is gravely questioned by scholars.

Our estimate of the Nazarene must be taken from the four Gospels, which are themselves very debatable material. It must be remembered that they were written on parchments and copied many times before the oldest now in existence was preserved. No one knows how much of the original accounts was taken out by the copyists nor how many lines were added. We leave this question to the battleground of criticism and content ourselves with what may not be questioned as true.

Jesus was a Galilean carpenter, and as such he doubtless belonged to the carpenters' union and was in touch with the great labor organizations of the day. When he began to attract attention as a public teacher it was precisely because of his radical opposition to every form of oppression practiced by the church and the state. His radicalism increased with every public address he made, and he finally drew down on his head the opposition of the ecclesiastical powers of Palestine and the military despotism of Rome. This could be, only because he placed himself in enmity to both. Against the Pharisees, who were the defenders and teachers of the Jewish faith, Jesus turned his most caustic ridicule. He called them whited sepulchres, serpents, vipers, and against them he turned the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, which must have made the “Unco Guid” fairly gnash their teeth in wrath.
He manifested a cold contempt for the customs of his time, since nearly all of them were calculated to bind burdens on the poor. As he came in contact with these customs, no matter how much it offended the religious element, he set them aside or openly violated them. No rule was more severely practiced by the Jews than that of observing Saturday as a day of rest. With them all work ceased Friday night at sundown. They might not "bake or boil, travel or toil". History records the fact that thousands of Jews have died at the hands of an enemy on the Sabbath because they would not on this day lift their hands in self-defense. Their enemies learned to take advantage of this and attacked the Jewish cities on the Sabbath day. Jesus calmly ignored this custom and broke the Sabbath with impunity. When assailed, he proudly replied that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. It was to say,—"the day of rest is for man's benefit and well-being. You have made it a day of slavery. Do on the Sabbath day whatever is for your good. Guide your conduct by principle not by custom and prejudice." The Mosaic law of personal cleanliness which had been given for the health of the Jews had been distorted by the priests and teachers into a religious custom. Jesus went to the table once it is recorded, without washing. The orthodox Jews were horrified. Jesus turning on them said, "You make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter but within you are full of extortion and excess. Ye are like unto whitened sepulchres which indeed appear beautiful outwardly but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." He loved to remind the religionists who paid such reverence to the old prophets who had been stoned and murdered, that their reverence was sheer hypocrisy because they were doing the same things for which the old prophets had reproved their ancestors. In this connection he said to them "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers".

He mingled freely with the Gentiles, went into their houses, treated their sick, and accepted their hospitality. When the Jewish orthodoxy protested, Jesus gave them the parable of the good Samaritan showing thereby that goodness, in his mind, is based on deeds and not on beliefs. It must be borne in mind that in the time of Jesus, every law of Moses, relating to wealth had either been set aside by the ruling Jews, or was ignored by them. Jesus was very careful to avoid any collision with the Roman power, his purposes evidently being to first arouse the patriotic spirit of his own people before attempting to carry his message to the world.
White, in his "Call of the Carpenter," makes a very strong case in his contention that it was evidently in the mind of Jesus to set on foot a world-wide revolution of the working class and his studied effort to avoid a clash with the Roman government was for the purpose of firmly establishing his movement by first setting the working class Jews against the rich exploiters of their own nation. As he approached the third year of his ministry or public teaching he had won practically all Galilee and the outlying country of Judea. The people were ready to revolt but it was necessary to win over to his cause the city of Jerusalem. With the approach of the Feast of the Passover he decided to make a bold attack on the city. At this time the Jews from all nations would be gathered to celebrate the national independence and Jesus entered the city in a manner to attract public attention. Having entered the city, he made straight for the Temple where the masses were gathered buying their sacrificial animals. Here the Sadducees and priests were in full charge and reaping a rich harvest in money from the religious practices of the people. As an offering for his sins, each Jew on this event purchased some animal to be sacrificed.

I quote from the "Call of the Carpenter":

"A statute prescribed that the temple sacrifices must be with animals ceremonially clean and unblemished. The priests in all cases were the judges. This put a leverage in their hands which they would not be slow to use. They had established a market inside the temple enclosure for the sale of sheep and oxen for sacrifices and a lowly worshiper, poor but with devotion still aflame within him, would come up to the Capital in the festive season and buy an animal for sacrifice in the public markets of the city, where because of the healthy competition, prices were normal. When he brought this animal to the temple, the priestly officials would proceed solemnly to inspect it and then with sorrowful countenances would announce to the trembling worshiper that however sound it might appear to the unpracticed eye, the animal was ceremonially unclean, thereby the man was compelled to buy an animal at an advanced price of one of the traders in the temple. The temple tax was payable in the temple currency, by reason of that old statute of Isaiah that no coin bearing the image of an emperor could be recognized as legitimate. This provided work for another class of traders, "the money changers", whereby a further extortion was practiced on the poor. The rage of the people went against this priestly class. It was just as Jesus several times said of them "You bind heavy burdens
and grievous to be borne and lay them on men's shoulders but you yourselves will not move them with one of your fingers". To the crime of extortion the priests had added the greater crime of treason. They were in league with the invaders. The High Priest had been changed in later years four times until Rome had found in Caiaphas a crafty and submissive tool of Roman tyranny. Caiaphas was son-in-law of Annas. This high-priestly family is described as bold, licentious, unscrupulous and degenerate."

It is probable that the whole city full of poor Jews was in a ferment of indignation on account of the robbery at the temple. Jesus entered there and filled with a great and righteous passion he made an assault on the money changers and drove them, doubtless with the help of others, out into the street. This sealed his doom for within a week he was accused by the priests of sedition and of stirring up the people against the state, and murdered by the soldiers of Rome.

We have presented but one side of the work of Jesus,—the side which he turned to the oppressors of his people. There was another side,—his attitude toward the working class. His message to them was one of consolation and encouragement. He would have them believe in the equality and fraternity of all men. A common origin and common wants make men equals and Jesus would have the most abject slave, the most sunken outcast raise his or her head in self-respect. He adopted into the immediate practice of his own and the lives of his followers, the current communism of the working-class of that day, that is, they had all things in common.

Wealth separated a man from companionship and communion with Jesus. We have this clearly explained and undeniably stated in the parables of the Rich Young Man and that of Dives and Lazarus. The rich could not enter into communion and fellowship with him any more than a camel could pass through the eye of a needle. Whatever else may be thought about the New Testament and the life and teachings of Jesus, the foregoing may not be gainsaid or denied. Jesus lost his life because he was setting the poor and oppressed in rebellion against the priests and the state. Who is so blind who cannot see that in the same spirit, though in a different manner the church and the state is in exactly the same relation to the working-class to-day that it was when Jesus lost his life because of the social message he gave the world, and is as much out of harmony with the spirit of Jesus as were the Pharisees and Sadducees?
CHAPTER IV.
THE FIRST APOSTLES AND HOW THEY ORGANIZED THEIR FOLLOWERS.

At the crucifixion of Jesus, his followers scattered, but they collected again and proceeded to organize for the purpose of promulgating the social program of Jesus. It is very clear that he had carefully instructed them what to do in case of his death, and it is equally clear that when the multitudes recovered from the shock of the murder of Jesus, there was an uproar in the city of Jerusalem that shook its very foundations. The social form which the new organization took is described in the Acts of the Apostles as follows:

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things common."

"Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

The new religious organization at once took a substantial economic form, adopting into its system the prevailing communism of the labor organizations. This became the common and prescribed practice of Christians everywhere with the possible exception of those churches organized by Paul, whose method of teaching Christianity was quite different from that of the instructed disciples of Jesus.

Once in a conversation with a minister of the gospel I pointed out the fact that the Christians practiced communism and that it was enjoined upon them both by Jesus and the apostles. I cited abundance of scripture to prove my position. Although this clergyman had appended to his name the title of D. D. and was a graduate of a theological seminary, the entire subject was new to him and he was surprised, even alarmed at my statements. On the succeeding day I met him again and his face was brightened. With a triumphant manner he said: "I went home last night and looked the matter up in my commentary and found that while the practice was begun at Jeru-
salem, it was abandoned because it wouldn't work." Poor preacher, poor commentator. The blind one leading the blind! Commentaries have not been written to elucidate the truth but to prove the doctrines of the church.

The Christians DID cease to practice communism, but it was not until the fourth century, when the apostles and the fathers were dead, when, like the Israelites at the foot of Sinai, they called for the Golden Calf of images and institutionalism, and the civilizations of Rome, Greece and Judea faded away into the dark ages whence the people of Europe only emerged after centuries of ignorance, suffering, religious persecution and despair. We now have abundant evidence to prove that the apostles and missionaries of the new religion spread themselves in all directions, going at once to the unions where they preached the gospel of freedom and equality. Evidence has been found again and again of the fact that whole unions were converted to the new faith, abandoning their pagan worship and accepting Christianity, which assured immortality to the humblest and whose economic philosophy fitted every need of the working man. Whenever an apostle lost his life the cause can be easily traced to the fact that the rich, the merchants and traders, had been the accusers, and no matter what the charge the fundamental cause can be found in the ancient class struggle between the exploiters and the unions, the latter now everywhere turning to Christianity.

The only essential difference between the ancient union and the Christian society of the early century was in the matter of religion and worship. They both practiced communism. Therefore, the apostles, who were themselves humble working men, found it easy to plant Christianity wherever union organizations existed.

About this time the Roman plutocracy began to realize the danger of a revolt from the unions. The proletarian or working class population vastly exceeded the master class, just as it does to-day, and the workers were very closely knit together in their unions. It was decided in the Roman senate, composed of millionaires, just as is our senate in this republic, to adopt repressive measures to break up trades organizations. At this time we find that the apostles and their assistants had spread themselves throughout the unions of the Roman cities until hundreds of thousands were followers of the humble Nazarene. Christianity being planted in the unions, the latter became a hundred fold more full of life and purpose than under Pagan-
ism. The slave began to feel the instincts of manhood. He saw in himself a future freeman; he felt possessed of a soul, and his unionism and his Christianity, now often one and the same, became something for which he would give his life. There was practically none of the wealthy class who espoused the Christian faith. To be a Christian meant to associate with workmen and slaves; to smell garlic and the manifold accompaniments of the life to which arrogance and wealth has always reduced the class who bear the world's burdens. It never could have occurred to these humble apostles into whose hands was entrusted the work of planting the gospel of equality among the workers, that the time would come when the rich would be the Christians, in name, at least, and the poor would cease to follow the Master. Yet 2,000 years after, millionaires teach Bible classes on Sunday and exploit the working class of life's necessities during week days. Bishops and ministers die wealthy, take long jaunts across the continent in palace cars, the guests of plutocracy, and the church stands by and blesses the nations as they shed each other's blood.

The apostles made little effort to convert the wealthy. The Epistle of James is fairly aflame with its terrific condemnation of the rich. None other than Paul made any effort to reach the official classes. He believed the end of the world was close at hand, and his mind turned more to matters of faith and the resurrection than to temporal affairs.

The preaching of the economic side of Christianity and its ready acceptance by the unions could not but alarm the ruling class of Rome and a determined effort was inaugurated looking to the crushing both of unionism and Christianity. The awful slaughter of the Christians by Nero's order, the burning of the city, the devastation and butchery that spread throughout the empire that followed, are matters of accepted historic fact. The apostles lost their lives. Probably hundreds of thousands were slaughtered and tortured, but Christianity was not destroyed, for it had spread like light, penetrating every nook and cranny of the empire. The Christians hid away in caves. They fled to remote regions, only to reappear at the first cessation of hostilities. Then came finally a Roman emperor whose shrewdness succeeded where the sword failed. Constantine became a patron of Christianity and legalized the new religion. Under his patronage was founded the church. An official hierarchy arose; a religious despotism was established. The economic side of Christianity was obliterated. Communism was crushed. Charity for the first time was practiced. The church became the mother to
which the poor were to look for aid and support. The rich became contributors. Christianity died. It has never had its resurrection. Instead of being punished for accepting Christianity, as was the case in the early centuries, it now became a capital offense to refuse the offices of the church. Men and women were burned at the stake, boiled in oil, torn asunder by cruel machines of torture because they refused to accept the tenets of institutionalism. The horrors of the inquisition were introduced. In vain would the church cover up its bloody work of the middle ages. Its history is written in human gore and the stains cannot be washed out. The current Christianity of the day has settled into a senseless dogma out of which has been taken every revolutionary conception of Jesus. It preaches salvation in a world to come, through Christ, and prates of a heaven where all sorrow will be wiped away, but beyond a sickly sentimental charity, always debasing and never adequate to human needs, it offers nothing to relieve society from the awful curse of greed and selfishness, which is exhibited in capitalism. Its apostles and preachers are silent amidst social and economic wrongs which cry to heaven. The working class is told to love Jesus, and well they might if they could know him as he was. But the Jesus which is preached to the world is a creature of theology, a being who is constructing mansions for departed souls. Not only has the church discarded all the revolutionary doctrines of Jesus, but in many parts of the world has arrayed itself in open hostility to the working class in its effort to break the chains of wage slavery and possess itself to the means of production and distribution.

Recently in this country, Wall Street had the effrontery to organize a great religious crusade under the high sounding title of “Men and Religion Forward Movement” for the express purpose of distracting the attention of the working class from political and industrial organization. J. P. Morgan headed the subscription list with a substantial donation. It failed of its purpose, but it is eloquent in its depicting of the base purposes to which the capitalist class has ever prostituted religion. In Russia it is the Greek Catholic Church that bolsters up the despotic throne. This hierarchy is directly responsible for the murder and imprisonment of hundreds of thousands of Russian working-men and peasants, whose only crime is that they are asking a chance to live. In Protestant nations it is the Protestant Church that is used for the same purpose, though with less effect because Protestantism is less institutional and, hence, less cohesive.
CHAPTER V.

THE FATHERS OF CHRISTIANITY.

The writers on Christianity between the death of the apostles and the fourth century, after which all of the radical doctrines of Jesus and the apostles were eliminated from practice, are known as the Christian fathers. Much of their writings have come down to us from the original manuscripts. We could compile a volume of testimony in behalf of our position if it were necessary, but we will content ourselves with quoting from the compilation made from a masterly work written by Prof. Nitti, of the University of Naples, Italy, entitled "Catholic Socialism". Summing up as a conclusion of his whole work, Prof. Nitti says: "It is certain that the early Christians practiced communism or community of goods."

The following quotations are taken direct from his book, and we submit them in evidence:

"In the fourth century Christianity had become the religion of the poor throughout a great part of the Roman Empire. The wealthy class still remained faithful to the old pagan worship. The religious conflict transformed into the economic only increased the hatred between the two naturally hostile classes.

"According to the primitive church, avarice was one of the greatest crimes. Usury (lending at interest) was strictly forbidden.

"We are bound to admit that Christianity was a vast economic revolution more than anything else.

"'All is in common with us except women', says Tertullian.

"'We carry on us all we possess and share everything with the poor.'—St. Justin.

"'The soil,' says St. Ambrose, 'was given to the rich and poor in common. Wherefore, O ye rich, do ye unjustly claim it for yourselves alone? O ye rich, do ye unjustly claim it for yourselves alone?' Nature gave all things in common for the use of all—usurpation created private right.

"'Behold,' writes St. John Chrysostom, 'the idea we should have of the rich and covetous; they are truly as robbers, who, standing in the public highway, despoil the passers by.'
"'A common life, Oh, brethren,' says St. Clement, 'is necessary for all and most of all for those who wish to serve God without end, and to imitate the life of the apostles and their disciples. For the common use of everything in this world should be free to all men. But through iniquity, the one claimed this belonged to him, and the other that, and thus came division among men.'

"For St. Augustine, property is not a natural right, but a positive right, founded simply on civil authority.

"'Unhappy ones that you are!' says St. Basil the Great, addressing the rich, 'What answer will you make to the Great Judge? You cover with tapestry the bareness of your walls, and do not clothe the nakedness of men. You adorn your steeds with most rich and costly trappings, and despise your brother who is in rags. You allow the corn in your granaries to rot or be eaten by vermin, and you deign not even to cast a glance on those who have no bread. You hoard your wealth, and do not deign to look upon those who are worn and oppressed by necessity. You will say to me: What wrong do I commit if I hoard that which is mine? And I ask you: Which are the things that you think belong to you? From whom did you receive them.'

"In his homilies, St. John Chrysostom speaks with profound contempt of the rich of Antioch and Constantinople. 'You received,' he says to them, 'your fortune by inheritance; so be it! Therefore, you have not sinned personally, but how know you that you may not be enjoying the fruits of theft and crime committed before you?' He never ceases from stigmatising the rich upon all occasions, and notwithstanding the persecution they carry on against him, by which they finally succeed in ruining him, and forcing him to quit Constantinople, they cannot, however, silence him or prevent him from openly declaring his aversion to wealth. One day, in speaking of the misfortune of SS. Saturnius and Aurelianus, having violently censured the rich men of the city, he exclaims: 'They say to us: 'Wilt thou never cease from speaking ill of the rich? Still more anathemas against the rich!' and I answer: 'Still your hardness toward the poor!'

"The rich of those times reasoned very much in the same manner as do some individualist writers of the present day. 'The poor,' they said, 'deserve their lot. They are idlers who do not even wish to work; noxious parasites whom it would be better to do away with. Some of them are simply beggars, who speculate on people's kindness of heart. No,' they added,
'God does not love the poor, for if He loved them He would remedy their misery.' But to these objections, St. John Chrysostom replied with most severe accusations. 'You say that the poor do not work,' he cries to the rich, 'but do you work yourselves? Do you not enjoy in idleness the goods you have unjustly inherited? Do you not exhaust others with labour, while you enjoy in indolence the fruit of their misery?'

"An infinity of citations might be given on the subject, for almost all the fathers of the church, up to the seventh century, considered communism as the most perfect and most Christian form of social organization. Usury, by which, like Christ, they meant simple lending at interest, was according to them, a capital offense.

"According to St. Jerome, 'Opulence is always the result of theft, if not committed by the actual possessor, then by his predecessors.' For St. Clement, private property is the fruit of iniquity. St. Basil considers the rich man as a thief, and St. John Chrysostom insists on the necessity of restoring at all costs community of goods. According to St. Augustine, private property originated in usurpation, etc.

"Such maxims have, moreover, left profound traces in the Canon Law. In the Corpus Juris Canonici, private property is also considered as an evil, since according to Divine Law, all things are common to men, as air and light. Similar theories could be received by the church, when it was but the refuge of the poor, the asylum of the helpless, when community of goods was more or less practiced. But when Christianity became the official religion, and was adopted as a social necessity, even by the rich, even by those who up to the last had continued in the old Pagan worship, it became necessary to mitigate the old evangelical doctrine on property.

"The doctrines held by the early fathers of the church on the nature of property are perfectly uniform. They almost all admit that wealth is the fruit of usurpation, and, considering the rich man as withholding the patrimony of the poor, maintain that riches should only serve to relieve the indigent; to refuse to assist the poor is, consequently, worse than to rob the rich. When, after Constantine, Christianity became, on the contrary, the official religion, and was embraced by the rich and by members of the government, the ecclesiastical writers manifested quite different opinions on the subject of property."
Reader, what do you think of the perfidy and fraud that has been practiced on you by the clerical class? Has your priest or preacher ever told you the truth about these things? Why, do you think, has he not? The chances are that like you, like the writer, he has not known the truth. He has been deceived along with the rest of us. It is now our duty to place the facts before him, and before all your Christian neighbors.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION.

It would give me great pleasure to write in this chapter that the Protestant Reformation restored the primitive character of Christianity, but I cannot do it because it is not true. Martin Luther founded the Lutheran Church but he did not go back farther than the fourth century for his model and at this date Christianity had lost all its revolutionary essence. Martin Luther was far from being the "good" man that his followers supposed him to be. He enjoined monogamy on the poor, but permitted and sanctioned polygamy among the titled classes. Luther had a profound contempt for the common people.

Calvin founded what grew to be the Presbyterian Church but neither did he get back to the economics of Jesus and his branch of the Reformation was purely theological.

Wesley founded the Methodist Church and he went back to Pentecost for his design and pattern, but it was not the communism of Pentecost that he adopted as his model but the psychological part purely,—the rushing mighty winds and the tongues of fire. His reformation was an emotional one. How far it was from comprehending the revolutionary doctrines of Jesus, can be read in its position on the slavery question in America. One-half of the Methodist Church prior to the war—that part in the South—seceded in order that its bishops and preachers might preach the doctrine that God had ordained some men and women to be chattel slaves. This same Jesus who stirred up the slaves in his day to demand their freedom and lost his life for his pains, was by the Southern Methodists made to have ordained slavery. The Methodists of the North were just as certain that Jesus and the Bible were against slavery. Out of this division a humorist wrote: "The Methodist Church North of God—and South of God."

Another great denomination has attempted to restore primitive Christianity but their restoration consists in baptis-
ing their converts by immersion and taking the communion every Sabbath. It seems never to have occurred to these good folks what Jesus said to the Pharisees “Ye pay the tithe of mint and anise and cummin and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith”.

Primitive Christianity will never be restored until Christian people cease to be compromisers with economic injustice and set themselves in solid array against all forms of legal exploitation and robbery,—in short, no one can be a real disciple of Jesus, who is not a Socialist, for the Socialists without making any pretense of religion, stand on these questions exactly as Jesus did when he preached from the mountain sides of Palestine and on the streets of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER VII.

SOCIALISM.

Among Socialists not well versed in our philosophy, it is often asserted that Jesus was a Socialist. Of course, this is not true because Socialism was impossible in his time. Socialism involves the social ownership of machinery. In the days of Jesus there was no machinery such as the term means to us now. The soil could have been owned by society and that is exactly what Moses provided for the Jews. Society could have owned the sailing vessels and the camels used for transporting goods over land. But production was by hand work and society could not own the means of production, since production was individual, rather than collective. Jesus enjoined upon his followers the only possible socially just system in his day—communism—the placing together of things produced and the common use of the same. This, as I have shown you, both the Christians and the unions practiced.

The Christianity of the day of Jesus was antagonistic to the state. It was the state that robbed the people through taxation. The state took everything, in the way of wealth, that the people produced, by means of a tax levy. The state enforced the collection of taxes through its standing army. The spoils were divided among those who shared the ruling power, a very small class. After the church and the state were united the priests were included in this class.

Modern capitalism as we know it in our day, exploits the working and producing class, not through taxation, but by means of rent, interest and profit. The capitalists own the machinery of production and distribution. They control the
money used in exchange and they own the houses where the people live. They own the light, heat and water supplies, in short the capitalists own the means of production,—everything the people use. The aim of the Socialists is to remove this ownership from the capitalist class and vest the title in society, after which we will all share in the production of wealth according to the amount of labor and time we give to it. We will not own all things in common because that is not necessary, but on the contrary will own many things privately. Our share of the products as it comes into our hands we will privately own and individually use. We will own our homes and the things we use in those homes, in short everything that is privately used by the individual for his own pleasure and need. This will do away with classes,—exactly what Jesus aimed at in his own program. This will end the incentive for vice, crime and prostitution.

It will make all people of all races and the sexes economically free and independent. Instead of destroying the home as maliciously charged by our enemies, it will establish a basis for a true monogamy because it will make the man and the woman equal. It will afford the child the opportunity to be properly born, rightly nourished and truly educated.

Everything good for man will be at his disposal.

Is there anything in the foregoing that will hurt us? Has Socialism one evil from which the race should shrink? We ransack our brain in vain for a single thing.

Capitalism will be shattered on the rock of the unemployed and the church will fail in its opposition to Socialism because it cannot feed its idle membership. Capitalism has nothing to offer the working class but a job, and this job is not big enough to go around. The church has nothing to offer the workers but a heaven after death, and the poor wretch is taught that if he commits suicide, then he will go to hell, so he is denied even this means of escape from his misery. Hungry men and women cannot eat masses and Te Deums and the platitudes of protestantism offer a scant diet for hungry stomachs.

Socialism will provide work for every member of society, and for this an abundance of all that the earth produces.

Socialism does not take away the hope of heaven. It will only bring it down to earth as Jesus prayed, "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven."
Socialism has no criticism to offer on the philosophy of Jesus. Indeed his moral philosophy is the only foundation on which an enduring civilization can be built.

Socialism is the enemy of capitalism and it must therefore oppose all who support or indorse the capitalist system. He who is not for us is against us, and there can be no compromise.

If the church chooses to ally itself with all that Jesus condemned and to thrust itself between the working class and its inevitable goal, it must take the consequence.

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