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Where We Stand

By

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WHERE WE STAND

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: No one, I think, who has at all thought upon the subject I have been requested to speak to you upon to-night can have failed to notice its scope and comprehensiveness. Dealing, as it does, with the three main phases of the world's life and thought, it is indeed one of those subjects of which Matthew Arnold has aptly said: "They at once invite and repel criticism by reason of their very magnitude." Whatever the strength or weakness of the organized Socialist movement in this city, it is well to bear in mind that it is to-day the largest and most far-reaching political movement in the world. Never before, I think, has there been a single political party based upon definite principles, with the strength that the great International Socialist Party possesses. To state the position of such a party under the important heads that my subject is divided by is, therefore, no mean task. It may well be, indeed, that by some of you I am already condemned for my presumption in attempting to do so in the compass of a single lecture. You will, perhaps, absolve me, however, if I declare at the outset that I do not pretend to do more, because I cannot possibly hope to do more, than indicate our position in a general way—in bare and even incomplete outline—and without going into elaborate details. Further than that, the subject is not my choice, but was imposed upon me by the committee at whose invitation I am here to-night.
Having said so much in extenuation, if you please, of my own part in the matter, let me revert just for a single moment to something I have already said. I have referred to the subject as dealing with "the three main phases of the world's life and thought," and perhaps I ought to make that clear. Stated in the common phraseology of everyday life, these divisions mean that we are to deal with:

1. The supply of the material requirements of life;
2. Our moral obligations to each other and to society as a whole;
3. Our responsibilities and powers as citizens, and, in a wider sense, the form and character of the institutions and laws by which we are governed.

A brief reflection, I am sure, convince you that I have not been guilty of any exaggeration in describing the subject as I have done.

There is another word of criticism which I may be allowed to anticipate, since I have no doubt that it has already rooted itself in the minds of some, even in this audience. In all parts of the world there are to be found earnest-hearted men and women, who are equally interested with ourselves in bringing about a state of Order and Brotherhood in place of the Chaos and Strife of to-day, with whom, however, we do not find it possible to agree, much as we may, and do, admire their earnestness and zeal. They seek to bring about a better social condition by and through the moral regeneration of the individual. They ignore the all important fact that society is not merely a large number of individuals; evolution has made it an organism, and each unit of the whole being interdependent upon the other units; each life being affected by the lives of others, this individual appeal and effort must be, to a very large extent, abortive. Forever preaching "Be Good!" they disregard entirely the fact that all the cir-
cumstances of life, circumstances that are inseparable from the essential qualities of our industrial system, conspire to make true "Goodness," meaning by that term right and just living, impossible. Where is the sense or where the morality in telling a man he must be good or be damned if some fundamental wrong in society itself, which he individually cannot alter, makes it impossible for him to be good? This I assert to be true of our present industrial system—called "System" only in irony, and more properly "Chaos"—as I shall presently try to show.

In my humble judgment, our friends who talk of solving the social problem by the individual acceptance of an ethical ideal, whether rooted in theological belief or otherwise, are acting as foolishly as if they attempted to build a cathedral from the spire downwards. They are "placing the cart before the horse" with a vengeance! You might just as well argue that the pyramids of Egypt were built from the apex to the base, as contend that moral regeneration must precede economic change. That is our view. Before you talk of rules of conduct, make sure of the means of life. Before you talk ethics to a man feed him, since it is obvious that unless he is fed he will cease to live at all. That is a simple and perhaps somewhat crude statement of a fairly obvious fact, and that fact, in turn, is but a faint expression of a great and profound truth which lies back of all social progress.

We believe in evolution. Everybody believes in evolution nowadays, so that is not such a startling or dangerous statement to make, as it would have been comparatively few years ago. But we not merely believe that in the organic world all life is the result of evolitional changes; we believe that the same process is at work in society itself, and that there is a law of social evolution which is but the counterpart of the law which pervades the organic world. Some of us are fond of
calling ourselves "Revolutionary Socialists," and whenever we do some good critic is sure to cry out: "You are wrong; you are opposed to evolution!" This is not true; precisely the contrary is true. We are the only people who logically and consistently apply that principle to social science. There is no necessary antagonism between Evolution and Revolution, as any scientist will tell you.

Revolutions are but necessary stages in the general process of evolution. That is true alike of organic and social evolution, and, after all, "Social Revolution" simply means that "Social Evolution" has reached a stage where transformation is not only possible, but inevitable. We do sometimes hear men say, with a pessimism that is appalling, "Things are to-day as they always have been and always will be," and having said so much they look abundantly satisfied that they have settled the matter for good and all. Yet, if there is one fact more plainly written on the blood-stained pages of the world's history than another, it is that things have not always been what they are to-day; that the present form of society is the result of a long series of changes logically consequent upon each other, and all the signs of the time portend that we are on the eve, nay, in the very midst of, further great and far-reaching changes.

Mankind began to exist upon this planet in a state of savage barbarism without any conception either of private property or of individual rights. The form of society was that of a rude tribal communism, the interests of the individual being entirely subordinated to those of the tribe itself. When wars broke out among the different tribes, it was the avowed purpose of each tribe to kill as many of the opposing tribe as possible. Then came a time when it was recognized that a man could produce more than was necessary for himself, and thenceforth it was the aim of the warring
tribes to take as many prisoners as possible. These prisoners became the reward of the bravest and most successful in the fray, and thus, out of the communal association for defence against foes, human and other, came class dominance and private property, and man first spake the words “Mine” and “Thine.” From chattel slavery it is easy to trace the rise of that more modified form of slavery which underlay the Feudal system, and its subsequent decline—a form of class domination followed by still another in which the worker became a wage-earner, and, ultimately, the mere adjunct of a machine. Thus the progress of the world has been from Savagedom with its underlying elemental communism, to Slavedom with its class domination; from Slavedom to Serfdom and thence to Wagedom, class dominance being the essential feature of each. We believe that this law of change still operates and that the next great change will at least be in the direction of Freedom. We, at any rate, do not believe with the dyspeptic Carlyle that “the destiny of mankind is downward to an everlasting swine trough.” No! Painful and slow as the progress may be, all footprints on the sands of the ages betoken an upward march.

Just as in the evolution of organic life it is necessary to find a determining factor—a force that determines the time and the character of each successive change—so in this process of social evolution. Therefore we ask ourselves, “What force was it that determined the time and the manner of the great changes we have seen? What, for example, brought about the destruction of Feudalism and the establishment in its stead of a system based upon wage-paid labor?” and the reply comes, that it was the economic force—an industrial change culminating in the industrial organization of the towns. The propelling force behind all history is not ideal, or moral, but economic, centered in man’s power over the forces of
external nature. What the determining force summed up in the old adage, "Self-preservation is the first law of nature," is to organic evolution, economic pressure is to social evolution. This is the theory of the economic determinism of historical development summed up by Karl Marx in that famous sentence: "In every historical epoch the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up and from which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch." Because life is finally dependent upon the supply of its material requirements, any far-reaching change in the means of producing those material necessities must affect the whole life.

I fear that I have dwelt longer upon this than I had intended or than I ought to have done, but you will, I am confident, forgive me in view of its obviously great importance. You will henceforth know at least why we lay much stress upon the material basis of life.

In order that we may understand the problems incident to the production and distribution of wealth, it is necessary, it seems to me, to know first of all what we mean by wealth. Primarily, it may be said to consist of an abundance of useful or otherwise desirable things, quite irrespective of whether they can be exchanged for other things or not. The savage without any idea of exchange, but with all his felt needs plentifully supplied, was a comparatively wealthy man. But in our modern society, based upon production for profit rather than for use, the idea of wealth is commonly associated with exchange, and wealth itself may be said to be an accumulation of commodities, or articles possessing the quality of sale or exchange. Now, we take the view that this quality is produced by labor. Going further, we say that the value of all commodities is determined
by the amount of socially necessary labor-power embodied in them.

That is not a theory peculiar to the Socialist. We are not seeking to impose a strange principle upon the student of political economy when we state it, but, on the contrary, it is common to all the economists of the "Classical School." Sir William Petty, who wrote in the time of Charles the Second, taught that very clearly; Adam Smith, in his epochal work, The Wealth of Nations, laid great stress upon it, declaring labor to be "the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities," and that "it is natural that what is usually the produce of two days' or two hours' labor should be worth double of what is usually the produce of one day's or one hour's labor." Ricardo and John Stuart Mill both endorse this theory of value, the former declaring it to be "a doctrine of fundamental importance in political economy." Benjamin Franklin, too, estimates the value of everything by labor and declares that "the value of all things is most justly measured by labor." Thus you will see that this view of labor as the source of all wealth and the basis of value is amply supported by all great economists of note. True it is that we have our Decadents of political economy, mere word spinners, who seek to evade this truth and its logical consequences. We are told by some of these "profound" and "deep thinkers that there is something even more important than labor, and when we ask what it is, we are told that it is "genius," "ability," "managing capacity," and so on. Now, to any but these very clever gentlemen it would be easily apparent that if all the genius of the ages could be concentrated in the mind of one person, and that person were to sit and think, let us say upon a theory of agricultural chemistry, from now till the crack of doom, it would not assist the growth of a single ear of corn unless actually embodied in labor. Ability, in the abstract, apart from labor
could never produce—never has produced—a pin's value.

This attempt to divide labor into two separate classes, “intellectual” and “non-intellectual,” is entirely absurd and foreign to the whole science of economics. John Stuart Mill taught very much sounder political economy, when he declared that “even the stupidest hodman who carries the hod of brick or of mortar up a ladder performs a task that is not wholly mechanical, but is in-part intellectual.” In the world of industry there is no such thing as “unskilled labor,” and it always seems to me a great pity that workers themselves should use the cant phrase. Let some of those who use it, college professors as well as the “skilled artisans,” who repeat their glib sophistries, take hold of the handles of a plow, and they will find, I think, that it requires a very considerable amount of “skill” and “ability” to plow a straight furrow. When, therefore, we speak of labor, we mean all those physical and mental qualities in ourselves which are used in the production of wealth. Thus, to take the case of a great railway, we say that the labor of the engineer who designed the plans and of the surveyor is equally necessary—but no more so—with that of the man who coal's the engine or lays the tracks. You might have all the plans ever conceived by man’s ingenuity, but without the labor of the coal miner, the iron miner, the steel worker, the excavator, the mason, the boiler maker, and numerous other workers you could not have a railway. Rightly understood, the labor of the lowest and most ill-paid is equally as valuable—because equally indispensable—as that of the highly-paid official.* Therefore, we

* This must not be construed as implying that every such “official” of modern industry, whether highly paid or otherwise, is, per se, a useful worker. This should be trite to the humblest intellect. Yet, the warning seems necessary in view of a good deal of lamentably loose thinking, speaking and writing lately observed.
are entitled to protest, and do protest, against a system which gives to one man working under conditions of comparative comfort and ease, a salary amounting to a hundred or perhaps five hundred, times as much as the wages of another whose labor, equally necessary, is attended with discomfort and risk to life and limb. But there is a worse phase of the question than this. A pale-faced curate in New England, for example, who, it may be, never saw the railway, will be drawing a comfortable sum, in the shape of dividends, from the unpaid labor of the workers on some British railway, or some old maiden lady in the South of England whose only "labor" is the fondling of her tabby cat will draw from the unpaid labor of men, women and children in some American factory which she has never seen. How does this help those who so glibly talk of the "rent of ability"?

Again, we sometimes hear that it is not labor which constitutes value, but utility. Jevons, for instance, states that "value depends entirely upon utility." This does not mean that a sack of potatoes being more useful than a sack of gold will also be more valuable, nor that a ten cent collar button will be as valuable as one containing a costly diamond just because it is quite as useful. Ricardo killed that silly notion long ago. But when writers of the school of Jevons use the word "utility" they are word-jugglers, and they give to the word "utility" the meaning of "esteem," "desirability," and so on. This theory, the popularity of which is another evidence of the intellectual bankruptcy of capitalism, is only the old Supply and Demand theory masquerading under another title, Jevon's theory of value is equally remarkable with his other theory that commercial crises are somehow or other due to the spots on the sun!

Dismissing, then, the vagaries of these pseudo-philosophers, we can with perfect confidence rest upon the solid foundation of economic science, that
all wealth (as previously defined) is produced by labor, and that social labor is the real secret and explanation of the establishment of the relative value of commodities, which are, except in that one quality, utterly unlike each other. With this two-fold fact in mind, turn we then to the actual prevailing conditions of to-day—from theory to fact. What there do we find? Why, simply this, that those who possess the greatest share of the world's wealth are the idlers and those who produce the great bulk, nay, the whole, of that wealth, are those who possess least. This is the tragic paradox, that while all wealth is produced by labor applied to natural resources, only they who labor are without wealth! I give you this as a general rule which will not fail you through life; wherever you find luxury and ease you will find the idler, and wherever you find poverty and its attendant evils you will find the worker. Show me the workers in their hovels and I will tell you "These are they who built the mansions which the pampered sons and daughters of luxury inhabit."

This, then, is a serious question for the workers and challenges attention. If you ask me how this strange paradox is brought about, I reply without hesitation, that it arises from the robbery of labor. Perhaps you think that word "robbery" is too strong. Some of my friends tell me sometimes that I ought to use a milder and less obnoxious term; something more respectable, you know! I have been expecting them to suggest that more modern word, "kleptomania," which seems rather popular in circles of polite society. But I am satisfied with the old-fashioned Saxon word, which better than any other in our vocabulary expresses my meaning. That the robbery has been legalized I am perfectly aware, but that does not alter the fact. If a gang of brigands were to hold you up, and, after taking all you possessed, were to form themselves into a ring, and after electing a presiding officer and a secretary, were to declare
their action quite legal and proper, or if before robbing you they had thus met and called their meeting a parliament or congress, I am confident you would not like it any the better for that. Yet that is but a parallel case! I am always reminded when I speak on this theme of a story that was told me during the great Welsh Coal Strike in 1898, when the British Tory government, with that same love for Labor which all capitalist governments show, whether Liberal or Tory, Democratic or Republican, had sent its troops into the strike district to protect the "sacred rights of property," and, if possible, to break the strike. One evening at the time of the greatest agitation, the miners were holding a mass meeting on the top of a high hill thinking that there they would probably be free from molestation. As I was going up the hillside I overtook an old Welsh farmer, and we fell into conversation about the strike.

"This strike," said he, "reminds me of something that occurred here about three months ago."

"How so?" I inquired.

"Well, you see that farm upon the top of the other hill, right across the valley? Two men were going up to that farmhouse, and when they were midway up the hill they thought they'd like to get themselves some water from the old pump which was placed in the hillside by the vestry many years ago. So they went to the pump and began to pump for all they were worth. After they had been pumping with might and main for about twenty minutes or so, they had managed to get only about two pints of water—just two pints as a result of all their labor. When they got to the farmhouse, therefore, one of them said to the farmer:

"'I say, Jones, there's something wrong with that confounded pump.'"

"'Wrong with the pump? Why, what is it?' asked the farmer.
‘Well, we don’t just know what it is, but something is wrong—something must be wrong. Why, man alive, it took us twenty minutes to get two pints of water from the rusty old thing; it needs repairing.’

“The old farmer just laughed at them. ‘Is that all, my boys? Is that all? The pump is all right, only you don’t understand it—that is all. You didn’t know that I had a secret pipe laid on to that pump, and that for every pint you were pumping for yourselves you were pumping a gallon into the tank in our back yard!’”

Of course the farmer would say there was nothing wrong with a pump of that kind, and if I lived upon the top of the hill I would be prepared to swear by bell and candlestick and by all the saints in the calendar that that pump was all right; and if you lived there you would give that pump a certificate of good character without hesitation. But it is different, if, instead of being the farmer on the top, you are the man down in the hillside toiling at the handle. So when we hear people say that things to-day are all right; when we hear them condemn the “big, fat, burly and overpaid agitator” for stirring up discontent, we may be quite sure that they live somewhere in comfortable proximity to the tank on the top of the industrial hill, and that if they had to toil as we toil and to bear the burdens we bear, they would not be so ready to chant the praises of “sweet content.”

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, I do not think it will be necessary for me to tax your imaginations to show that there exists a very strong likeness between that ingenious pump and our present industrial system. Imagine, if you will for a moment, that all the great agencies of wealth production may be likened to a great pump. At the pump handle, toiling with might and main, are the great masses of the world’s workers. They are toiling day in, day out, year in and year out,
at a terrible cost to themselves. I do not know whether it has ever occurred to you, but it is a fact that for our much vaunted greatness and prosperity, we, the workers, pay a terrible price—a price that cannot be set down in terms of dollars and cents. No combination of figures, and no words in the whole of the human vocabulary can convey an adequate idea of its magnitude. If you could gather into a great ocean of waters all the tears of the widows and orphans who are made widows and orphans because on our railways, in our mines, our factories and our quarries it does not “pay” to protect the life and limb of the worker; if you could gather into a great volume of sound all the cries of the babes that are motherless, and the mothers that are childless because it does not “pay” the landlord under our reign of ghoulish greed to provide proper and adequate sanitary arrangements in the tenements—those crowded “warrens of the poor”—that are his; if you could only see in one great throng all the little child lives that go out each year upon the great ocean of death, because, in the richest cities of the world, there is no means of subsistence for them; and if you could see in one great army all the crippled and maimed of our great industrial centers who are crippled and maimed because it does not “pay” to provide protection for the life and limb of the worker in a world that is based upon profit and greed; with all that hideous phantasmagoria, and all that anguish, impressed upon your minds, you would only be beginning to conceive the terrible price which we are paying for our fancied “greatness.” And when we have so labored and sacrificed at the industrial pump, where do the results go? Out of our own sad life experience the answer is borne to us: “Into the tanks of those who live upon the top of the hill.” A few cosmopolitan capitalists, a mere handful of men like Carnegie, Morgan, Rockefeller, Yerkes and others have built upon the unpaid labor of
the proletariat a despotism greater than the tyrannies of old. They exercise to-day a greater power than any despotic Emperor or Czar the world has ever seen.

When we look at the question fairly it is readily apparent that there are, after all, only three means of living known to men—by the charity of others, by your own labor, or by stealing. All the experience of the ages does not reveal another means whereby men can live. If, however, we turn to the great wealth-holders of to-day and ask, "Whence this wealth—did you by your labor create these vast possessions?" there comes only an answering cry of derision. It remains, then, only to decide whether they hold that wealth and its resultant power through charity or theft, and we, the producers know full well that it is not by our charity. They do not come and beg us to give them of our substance, but on the contrary, when by our labor we have produced so much wealth, they take the lot and very kindly give us back just enough to enable us to live and continue working upon the same terms.

Perhaps you will say that it is not quite just to them; that they "give" us libraries, hospitals, art galleries, colleges and so on, all of which is quite true. As Victor Hugo once said, "the idlers will do anything for the workers except get off their backs." Such gifts, resting as they do finally upon the physical, mental and moral degradation of our fellows are demoralizing to our manhood. Moreover, did we get bare justice, which is all we crave, there would neither be any need of charity nor any to bestow it. Mind, I do not attack any individual; that were indeed a useless thing to do. If Mr. Rockefeller, for example, were to give up all his holdings in the great industrial concerns in which he is interested and were to become poor, that would not avail; others would take his place. Again, there is the absur-
dity of attempting to solve the social problem through the individual! So we go further back and begin at the beginning; we seek to change the conditions which do, and must, overpower the individual. And, let it not be forgotten, that it is just as wrong to submit calmly to robbery as to rob, and the continuance of this robbery of labor depends upon our own class. When we will it so, it will be ended.

It is manifest that society based upon production for profit, which is but another form of saying the exploitation of labor, is fundamentally wrong. We say that the whole of our institutions are founded on that wrong; and that the whole fabric of our so-called "civilization" is immoral from its center to its circumference. I say "so-called civilization" because the word is a monstrous misnomer. "Brutalization" is the word which best describes the anarchial conditions which everywhere confront us. How can the ceaseless striving of a robber class and its victims be called "civilization"? And this robbery of which we complain is not merely a question of dollars and dimes; it is not the amount of the robbery so much as its effect. It divides men into two hostile classes, for it is true, as a great Englishman once said, "There are in the world to-day two great classes, the idlers and the workers; and the workers are not really a class at all, they are the world itself, while the idlers are its parasites." Here is the terrible fact: that far transcending in importance and potency all other divisions, whether of race or color or creed, is this great economic dividing line. When we Socialists appeal to the class interests of the workers; when we urge the necessity of class-conscious political action, we are accused of creating a class war. But that is absurd. We do not create the class war—it exists as a result of our economic methods. We simply call attention to the fact of its existence and urge the necessity of dealing with
it. We abhor the class system and its evils and say it must be abolished. But how? that is the question. In order that the class war may be abolished its existence must be recognized. We emphasize it, therefore, and call upon our fellows to join us, because we know that in this strife there are no neutrals: in this especially is it true that "He who is not for us is against us." Further, we do not say to them "Let us defeat the ruling class that we may rule them as they have ruled us!" No, it is not a cry of vengeance or of envy: on the contrary, we say "Let us destroy the power of the ruling class so that henceforth there may be no classes but a unified people which is far better."

We shall all agree, I suppose, that whatever tends to divide men and to create strife and fratricide is wrong; and that, on the other hand, whatever tends to unite men in bonds of cooperation and mutual service is right, quite irrespective of religious dogma. By that agreement capitalism is condemned and Socialism establishes a claim upon your lives! But it is not merely a question of men being divided into opposing camps: there is something far worse than that. The division divides not only into warring classes, but it divides into a MASTER class on the one hand and a SLAVE class on the other. In England workers sing "Britons never, never shall be Slaves" and point to the Union Jack with glowing enthusiasm as the "Flag of the free," and in America the workers sing of their "Sweet land of Liberty" and point with pride to Bartholdi's statue of the Goddess of Liberty in New York harbor as a pledge of freedom to every child born in the republic, and to every alien that seeks a home within its shores. Every Fourth of July they rave of their "glorious independence," just for all the world as if it were true instead of being a colossal lie. Never was there in the world at any time in its history a people less in-
dependent, and more entirely dependent upon the will of a ruling class, than are the great bulk of the people of these two nations. And what is true of these countries is true of all the great commercial nations of the world. The liberty of the Englishman or the American amounts to the same as the liberty of the German, the Russian or the Spaniard—to work for such wages and under such conditions as the master class may determine, or starve. The much vaunted "Liberty" of the workers is, after all, only as Shelley sings:

"To work and have such pay
As just keeps life from day to day.
In your limbs as in a cell
For the tyrants' use to dwell.

'Tis to let the Ghost of Gold
Take from toil a thousandfold
More than e'er its substance could
In the tyrannies of old.

This is slavery—savage men
Or wild beasts within a den.
Would endure not as ye do—
But such ills they never knew."

There are two means of enslaving men: either you may, by purchase or by conquest, acquire the ownership of the people themselves—this is one way—or you may own the means whereby they must live. If you own all the means of a man's life, nay, further, if you own anything that he cannot live without, you are his master and he is your slave as truly as if you owned him by right of purchase or of conquest. Shakespeare realized that when he said:

"You take my house, when you do take the prop
That does sustain my house; you take my life,
When you take the means whereby I live."
If we apply that test to our economic system and ask ourselves whether we own all the means of life, or whether some indispensable things are not withheld from us, no amount of sophistry can hide the fact that the great bulk of the means of the common life are in the hands of a few people, and that we are dependent upon them for life itself. Thomas Carlyle, whose dyspepsia was responsible for many foolish sayings, said also some profoundly wise things. His description of the difference between the wage-worker and the chattel-slave ought to be graven on the tablets of the memory of every workingman and every working-woman. The difference between the white wage-worker and the negro slave, he said, consists principally in the fact that the negro slave was bought for a lifetime for so many hundreds of dollars, while the wage-worker is bought for so many cents an hour or so many dollars a week, as the case may be. That is the chief difference. Another thing is that we don't give them the trouble to offer us by auction nowadays; but instead we go and offer ourselves for sale, saying "please buy us at so much an hour or so much a week," for that is what it amounts to when one man has to beg from some other man the right to work. We sell ourselves on the instalment plan—and heaven knows the price is small! Under the old-time slave system the master who had a couple of thousand dollars invested in a slave would naturally look after the health of the slave, since he would lose if the slave died or was ill. But there is no money invested in the wage-slave and the employer has not that interest in his well-being. If a worker is killed or maimed, what of it? The employer loses nothing and there are plenty waiting to step into his place. Our position, then, leads us to condemn as wrong and immoral the whole fabric of society.

But it is not enough to formulate theories of destructive criticism: this is the age of the "af-
firmative intellect” and men are seeking for a positive ethical standard. We say that Unity must replace Strife before we can be even approximately civilized, and that can only be brought about by changing the very fundamental basis of our social relationships. We believe that the vitalizing force of an ethical impulse was never so much needed as now, and we have no sympathy with those who declare that ethical standards are good for old ladies and children alone. The very word Socialism indicates that we found our theories upon a profound belief in, and recognition of, social interests and obligations centered in those interests. Whatever advances the interests of society is right; whatever militates against those interests is wrong. We bring ethics back from the clouds of mythology to the world of men. A thing is right or wrong not by reason of the declaration of one God or many Gods, or the prophets of Gods, but by reason of its social effect. As Socialists, therefore, we do not ask ourselves what Moses or Christ, Buddha or Confucius, Madame Blavatsky or Mrs. Eddy, John Wesley or the Pope would say, but simply this: “How will it affect the working class to which we belong?” Just as the injustice that is done to labor is the measure of the wrong of our present conditions, justice to labor must be the standard by which alone it can be righted. In the light of the right of labor to the whole of its product, the world must be re-created. But, it may be argued “class interests” and “social interests” are not identical: how, then, can the interest of society as a whole be gauged by the interest of the working class? That is a perfectly fair question which we by no means wish to evade. Taking the position—the only logical position, it seems to me—that the interests of labor are fundamentally opposed to those of the exploiting class, and that between them, in the very nature of things there can be no reconciliation, we do not attempt the impos-
sible. Instead of that we say that all interests which conflict with ours, must, somehow or other, be eliminated. No matter how painful an operation that may be; it must be performed as a measure of self-preservation and protection. If a man suffers from cancer and calls a surgeon, the surgeon does not talk about the identity of interest of the cancer with that of the man's body. He doesn't try to find something that will help both at once. He well knows that such a thing would be ridiculous, and that if the cancer is not overcome it will overcome the body. Therefore he tries to eliminate the cancer. Capitalism is the cancerous growth in the social organism that must be eliminated in the interests of the organism as a whole. Thus the interest of the producing class becomes the standard of ethical judgment. And, after all, is it not everywhere clearly apparent that the interest of its useful and necessary members is the true interest of any body? In the hive it is always the bees' interests that are considered and not those of the drones. With the sum total of its experience for its bible, and its own well-understood interests for its moral standard, the awakened proletariat will build a new earth in which vice and misery shall find no place, and in which the moral Sahara of to-day shall be a moral Eden where the sweet spirit of Comradeship shall blossom forth like the fabled rose of unfading beauty.

How then does this great economic question, which we have seen to be also a moral question, become again transformed into a political question? There are many people who will agree with us so far as we have already gone, but will part company with us right here. Yet, this is the crucial point, and their agreement with us is of no value if they fail us here. If you agree that the present economic system rests upon the enslavement and robbery of labor, it becomes your duty to do whatever lies in your power to alter it.
Even a superficial examination will show that the exploiting class finds its greatest strength in its control of the legislative and governmental forces: it dominates the halls of legislature and the offices of administration; the courts of "Justice" are subordinated to its interests. If we desire some measure of protective legislation we must beg the hirelings of the enemy for it. Generally, when we ask capitalist legislators for bread they give us a stone; or if, perchance, they give us bread, other hirelings of the enemy in the "courts of Justice" will declare it to be "unconstitutional!" If we beg we are scorned and derided; if we strike we are shot down by their troops or bludgeoned by their police! Thus, by their possession and control of the forces of government, the exploiters are enabled to defend the infamy of their rule, and to crush any revolt against it. We find, moreover, that this is true no matter what the political badge of the individual exploiter may be. Scratch the politician, and, whether he be Democrat or Republican, you will be sure to find the capitalist. To paraphrase some words of Herbert Spencer, we insist that there is no political alchemy which can change an industrial enemy into a political friend. Whenever I read in the papers of the passing of laws that are injurious to labor; of injunctions granted against labor organizations, or of the shooting down of strikers, I refuse to join in the cry of "Shame!" that goes up from angry throats all over the land. "Shame" indeed there is, but it is our own. It is we ourselves who should hide our faces, for it is our own power that is behind the legislator, the judge and the policeman. The child that takes to school a rod to be used over its own shoulders, is made the butt of its companions' ridicule. Yet, its folly is but a grain of sand to a mountain, compared with that of the worker who votes for a capitalist politician of any stripe!

There is, in the political world, an element that
needs to be considered apart from the ordinary political parties. With the word “Reform” for its watchword, it seeks our support upon the ground of “practicability.” These “Reformers” promise “something here and now,” and urge our acceptance of the half loaf which is proverbially better than no bread. When we examine closely the pretension of these people we shall find that they have emasculated the word which they call themselves by, till it is no longer recognizable. They do not mean when they call themselves “Reformers” that they believe in re-forming, or making anew, but rather in patching up the old. Is there any use in this sort of thing? Why, if we are convinced of the fundamental wrong, should we seek anything short of its removal? As a well-known French dramatist has said, when we realize that the conditions of life and labor of the poor—long hours, excessive toil, poor food, insanitary workshops and homes, are responsible for the ravages of tuberculosis, there is no wisdom, but folly, in concentrating our energies on putting up signs warning people not to spit on the floor! Realizing our right to the whole of the world’s wealth, and the cause of our non-possession of an adequate supply of the means of life, why should we concentrate our efforts upon getting an old-age pension of a dollar and a quarter a week for all workers over sixty-five years of age—an age which comparatively few workers attain—instead of dealing with the basic wrong? That is not the way of “practical” men. When men invite us to “begin the solution” of the social problem, by municipalizing telephones, we decline on the ground that we are practical men. A doctor who prescribed worm powder for consumption, or court-plaster for cancer, would be quite as wise and as “practical” as most of our so-called “Reformers.” No, we want what William Morris calls “a world new-built,” not a patching and stitching of the old.
And that brings me to my last point. We urge
the importance of the political struggle, not alone
by reason of the necessity—the imperative neces-
sity—of taking away the weapons from the enemy
with which they do us most harm. Important as
that is, there is another reason, which is, perhaps,
even more important. We believe that whether
we will or no we shall have to face, perhaps at no
far distant date, not the mere possibility, but the
actual imminence of some comprehensive change.
The crisis itself is inevitable, but the result will
depend upon our preparedness or unpreparedness
to meet and cope with it. We do not say that the
common ownership of the means of life to be used
in the common interest cannot be brought about ex-
cept as a result of a political propaganda. We
know that there is at least one other way possible.
Goaded to desperation, men may rise in armed re-
bellion, and so accomplish the overthrow of the
evils of which we complain. Force may prove to
be as Marx has it, "the midwife of Progress," and
out of the travail of bloody and ruinous rebellion
may come Liberty and Comradeship; but there is
the danger that, as our friend, Hyndman, has
said, force may prove to be "the deadly abortion-
ist, strangling the new society in the womb of the
old;" that, in destroying the bad, we destroy the
very things we desire to preserve. "Take heed
lest ye pull up the wheat with the tares," is a
warning fraught with great and terrible impor-
tance. You remember those lines of Longfellow:

"There is a poor blind Sampson in this land,
Shorn of his strength, and bound in bonds of
steel;
Who may, in some grim revel, raise his hand
And smite the pillars of our commonwealth;
Till the vast temple of our liberties,
A shapeless mass of wreck and ruin lies."

The "blind Sampson" then was the negro slave;
the "blind Sampson" of to-day is the wage-slave bound in bonds, not of steel, but of ignorance, and the danger is that by rising in rage he destroys himself.

And, apart from the dangers of depending upon violent uprisings to bring about a better condition of affairs, we urge that is too terrible a thing if there are any other methods open to us. Force is always justifiable as a last resource, but not otherwise. At present we possess constitutional means whereby we can do all that is needed, and we Socialists urge that these should be used. We say, therefore, let us unite to bring about by well-considered political action, the social ownership and control of all the agencies of wealth production, distribution and exchange, believing that by that means we can best attain to that life of co-operation and liberty which we desire. Not the hybrid independent political action which sends a so-called "Labor leader" to support a party that is financed, officered and controlled by capitalists; but the straightforward, class-conscious, political organization of the workers consciously aiming at the elimination of the capitalist, and the right of labor to all that it produces, must be understood by our use of the term "independent political action." The common ownership and control of the common product of social labor, and all natural resources, must be the objective of every vote. Then, and not till then, shall we be true to ourselves and to each other. Do you say "It is a great task: too great to be accomplished?" Yes, truly it is a mighty undertaking: its magnitude is only equalled by its beauty. But there is no task too great—there can be no task too great, for the makers of the world and its history to accomplish. In the political vocabulary of an enlightened proletariat the word "impossible" finds no place. Once let it decide upon the establishment of the commonwealth and nothing can pre-
vent it. In the words of William Morris again:

"... There are three words to speak: WE WILL IT, and what is the foeman but the dream-strong wakened and weak?

Shall we not "Will it"—that wonderful time a-coming, "when all shall be better than well?"
Shall we not "Will it"—the end of this ghoulish Mammon-reign? Surely the answer is 'Yes! Then let us up and be doing! Let us translate conviction into action.

"Rise like lions after slumber,
In unvanquishable number—
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many—they are few!"
PURITANISM

What is the economic basis for the demand, which we see occasionally cropping out even now, to limit the length of a girl's bathing suit by law?

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By ESTELLE BAKER

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Miss Baker's book is not a preachment, nor a theory or a "study," but a living, gripping story of the Actual Lives of four Women of the Streets, with all the heart hunger, the yearning for maternity, and the sordid commercialism with which the Public Woman is always at war.

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