

The Inhumanity of Socialism eBook

The Inhumanity of Socialism

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Page 1

Title: The Inhumanity of Socialism

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The Inhumanity of Socialism

The Case Against Socialism & A Critique of Socialism

Two papers, the First Read Before the League of the Republic at the University of California, December the Fifth, Nineteen Hundred and Thirteen, and the Second Read Before the Ruskin Club of Oakland, California, Some Years Earlier by

Edward F. Adams

“And finally, let each of us according to his ability and opportunity practice and inculcate respect for the law, the maintenance of order, regard for the rights of others, admiration for the successful, sympathy with the unfortunate, charity for all, hope for humanity, joy in the simple life and contentment therewith.”

Foreword

One might write continuously while he lived for or against Socialism and yet at the end of a long and misspent life have said nothing that others had not said before him.

Nevertheless, new generations come on and have to learn about Socialism as they learn about other things, for there always have been and always will be Socialists. It is a habit of mind which becomes fixed in a certain number of each generation; and succeeding generations seem to prefer fresh statements of the theory to the study of the ancient texts. Besides, Socialistic endeavor, while its ultimate object in all ages is



the same, assumes different forms at different periods and is best dealt with in terms of the day.

I am opposed to Socialism because of its inhumanity; because it saps the vitality of the human race which has no vitality to spare; because it lulls to indolence those who must struggle to survive; because the theories of good men who are enthralled by its delusions are made the excuse of the wicked who would rather plunder than work; because it stops enterprise, promotes laziness, exalts inefficiency, inspires hatred, checks production, assures waste and instills into the souls of the unfortunate and the weak hopes impossible of fruition whose inevitable blasting will add to the bitterness of their lot.

Some years ago I was invited to dine with and address a charming group of Socialists comprising the Ruskin Club of Oakland. We had a joyful evening and I read to them "A Critique of Socialism" which forms the second part of this volume. It was published in 1905 by Paul Elder and Company, but almost the entire edition was burned in our great fire of 1906. As there are still inquiries for it, it is thought best to republish it. Obviously it was primarily intended to amuse my hosts, but there is some sense in it.



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A few months ago I was asked to present "The Case Against Socialism" to the League of the Republic, an organization within the student body of the University of California, it being the last of a series in which a member of the Faculty of Stanford University and a much respected Socialist of the State took part, neither of whom, much to my regret, was I able to hear. What I said seemed to please some of the more vigorous non-Socialists present who thought it should be printed. Those who prefer pleasant reading should skip the "Case" and read the "Critique." Edward F. Adams

San Francisco, June
Nineteen hundred and thirteen

The Case Against Socialism

The postponement of this address, which was to have been delivered two weeks ago, was a real disappointment to me for I did not then know that another opportunity would be arranged. As one approaches maturity, it becomes a joy to talk to a group of young people in the light of whose pleasant faces one seems to renew his own youth. Youth is the most precious thing there is — it knows so little it never worries.

It is difficult for me to be here at this hour of the day and it has been impossible for me to hear those who have preceded me in this course. What I have to say may therefore have too little relation to what has been presented from other points of view to be satisfactory in what seems to have been designed as a debate. Nor have I, in recent years, read much Socialistic or anti-Socialistic literature of which the world is full. From my point of view, as will presently be seen, perusal of this literature would be a waste of time for none of it that I have seen or heard of discusses what seems to me essential, but in saying this I must not be understood as disparaging either the sincerity or the ability of writers on this subject.

When I was more or less familiar with Socialistic controversy the Socialistic propaganda was devoted in different countries to the accomplishment of the immediate program which in the respective countries was considered the essential thing to be done next, very little being said about the ultimate end which it was hoped to reach in due time. Thus it happened that in some countries what was called the Socialistic agitation was directed to the accomplishment of what was already established by non-Socialists in other countries. That is doubtless so still. Those discussions do not interest me and I have not followed them and shall not discuss any of them here. I shall consider only the ultimate aims of theoretical Socialism and whether if accomplished they probably would or would not make for the general welfare and especially for the welfare of the least efficient.

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The ultimate aim of Socialism is the nationalization of all land, industry, transportation, distribution and finance and their collective administration for the common good as a governmental function and under a popular government. It involves the abolition of private profit, rent and interest and especially excludes the possibility of private profit by increase of values resulting from increase or concentration of population. The majority of Socialists would reach this end gradually, by successive steps, and with compensation to existing owners. A violent minority would reach it per saltum, by bloodshed if necessary, and by confiscation — “expropriation” they call it. All alike conduct their propaganda by endeavoring to create or accentuate the class consciousness of manual workers who constitute the majority of human beings and whose condition, it is insisted, would be improved under a Socialistic regime. The violent wing promotes not merely class consciousness but class hatred.

I have no time to split hairs in this discussion and it may be assumed that I understand that Socialists do not expect to absolutely control all personal activity but would leave all persons free to pursue any vocation which they might desire and to have and hold whatever they may acquire by personal activity and enterprise so only that they make no profit on the work of another or absorb for their own use any gift of Nature. No Socialist that I know of has attempted to draw the exact line between activities to be wholly absorbed by the State and those which would be left to private enterprise. No wise Socialist I think — if there are wise Socialists — would attempt to draw such a line at present. There is a certain vagueness in the Socialists’ presentation of their case.

And before we proceed further let us get rid of the intellectual fog which envelops and shelters the advocates of Socialism. It is the fog of humanitarianism. I see and hear no advocacy of Socialism whose burden is not the uplift of humanity. Now, humanitarianism is perhaps the most beautiful thing there is. There is no more ennobling and inspiring sentiment than desire for the uplift of our fellowmen; but it has no legitimate place in the discussion of Socialism. For an advocate of Socialism to even refer, in presenting his case, to humanitarian sentiment is to that extent to beg the question.

For if Socialism would improve the lot of mankind, or of the major portion of it, that settles the whole matter. The quicker we get to it the better. Opponents of Socialism insist that it would benefit nobody, and that as to the least efficient in whose behalf Socialistic doctrines are especially urged, it would be deadly. As to the strong or the fairly efficient we need not concern ourselves. They will get on anyhow. What it is important to consider is the probable condition of the less efficient, and especially the submerged class, under a Socialist regime.



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And consideration will be useful only if it is in cold blood, absolutely without sentiment, and especially without even sub-conscious assumption or imagination that the condition of the unfortunate, or less fortunate, would or would not be improved by Socialism, or whether mankind can or cannot be made happier by attempts to control economic conditions by interference with the natural working out of economic results as the resultant of opposing pressure of individual interests. And do not call me a brute if I reach the conclusion that human selfishness is the hope of the race.

Because selfishness inspires to energetic action which means the largest possible aggregate production which is the first essential prerequisite to abundance for all. It is useless to talk about better distribution until the commodities exist to be distributed. And there is no other such spur to production as the expectation of personal profit. The pieceworker with more satisfaction to himself and profit to the world will produce far more than he would turn out under a daily wage if his earnings are thereby increased. And there are no others who give so little for what they receive as those who work for the public.

The first count in the case against Socialism is that by making the majority of workers public servants without the stimulus of selfishness it would increase human misery by reducing the aggregate of production and therefore the possible per capita consumption.

That, however, is on the surface. Let us bore a little deeper toward the core of the subject. It is a fundamental fallacy of Socialism that all gain is the result of Labor and that therefore all gain belongs to Labor - the term "Labor" in practice meaning the great majority of laborers who are manual workers[1].

Of course Labor is essential to production — so is Capital, which we shall come to later — and as between two things, both essential, it is perhaps impossible to conceive of one or the other as superior.

But there is another element, also essential, but in a class so much above the other two essential elements, that it is not too much to say that without it there could be no production adequate to sustain for more than a brief time any great population. And that element is Brains. It is not to Labor but to the human intellect as developed in the exceptional man that we owe all that exists, outside of Nature, which we count valuable, and the ability to so use the resources of Nature as to enable mankind to live. If products were to be divided among mankind so that each should receive according to his contribution to the possibilities of production, after the exceptional men had received their just dues, there would be very little left for the rest of us. When European races first discovered this continent it probably supported less than one million souls, and the number was not increasing. That it will ultimately support some hundreds of millions is

due to the dealings of the human intellect with Nature. Brains do not get, do not ask, do not expect and could not use what would rightfully come to them.

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But intellects vary in character and usefulness, and let us try by differentiation and elimination to isolate and consider those particular classes of intellect whose activities bear most directly on the questions raised by Socialistic theory. The chiefs are the devotees of pure science — the Galileos, the Newtons, the Pasteurs, the Faradays, the Kelvins, and the innumerable company of those like them, many known but most unknown, who spend their days and nights in the search for truth. They deserve and get the greatest of rewards which is the respect and admiration of their fellowman. As for material things, they desire and get very little. Following them are the magnates of applied science, the Watts, the Stephenson, the Bells, the Edisons, and their like, who apply to beneficial use the discoveries of the great lights of pure science often with prodigious material profit to themselves. The patent offices know them all, big and little. They perform a magnificent service, are highly esteemed in their day and generation and their material rewards are great. And upon the whole the world does not grudge them what they get.

But there are others. Next after the magnates of applied science in public estimation, but of equal economic importance, I would place the Captains of Industry. Without their grasp of human necessity and desire and their organizing and directing ability, Labor would grope blindly in the dark by wasteful methods to the production of insufficient quantities of undesirable products. The Marxian[2] conception of an economic surplus wrongfully withheld from Labor which produces it is the disordered fancy of a fine intellect hopelessly warped by the contemplation of human misery and humanitarian sympathy with human distress. All economic discussion is worthless if tainted by human sympathy. The surplus value in production is trifling and seems large only because concentrated in comparatively few hands. The surplus of ages is concentrated in the structures which we see all about us, and in the commodities ready or partly ready for consumption and which will disappear in a short time. The annual accretions are small for an enormous amount of human effort is wastefully directed. That more effort is not wasted is due to the increasing necessities of an increasing population stimulating the most competent by the hope of personal gain to provide new means and new methods whereby those necessities may be served. No stimulus other than the hope of personal gain has ever been found effective to inspire this effort, or make it successful. Government administration invents nothing. It copies tardily and administers wastefully. Direction falls to those who compete successfully in talk not to those who demonstrate resourcefulness and masterfulness in foreseeing human requirements, utilizing available means for supplying them, and effectiveness in least wastefully directing labor in the use of these means. Our Captains of Industry



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are those who for the most part starting life with nothing but a sound mind in a strong body have risen to the direction of great affairs through unrestricted opportunity to strenuously compete through long hours of hard labor and the mental and bodily strength to endure it. There is no reason to suppose that any other method than the same strenuous and unrestricted competition would produce men equal to such responsibilities, or that any inspiration but the hope of personal gain would induce such effort. The contention that the honor of direction and the applause of the multitude would incite to the necessary competition is not sound. In the first place long years of inconspicuous service but with the same eager effort are essential preliminaries to the great places which but few can reach, and secondly the honor would go as it does now in public affairs, not to the man efficient in industry, but to the man efficient in talk. The one stimulus to personal exertion which Nature supplies, and the only stimulus which operates powerfully, and universally and continuously is the desire of personal gain coupled with the instinct for construction and accomplishment. Since the desire is for the largest possible production it is folly to try to withdraw that stimulus and substitute an emotion which, however powerful in a few persons and for uncertain periods, operates most strongly on those industrially least capable.

For I venture the assertion that there is not now and never has been among Socialists a single person who has demonstrated the ability to so direct the Labor of any considerable number of men either in production or distribution that the aggregate of yearly accomplishment at market value is as great as the aggregate cost at current wages.

The second count in the indictment of Socialism, therefore, is that for lack of the sole stimulus which Nature supplies, and the lack of opportunity under a system of equal tasks, with ideals of leisure, direction of production and exchange under a Socialistic regime would be so much less efficient than now that the aggregate waste would be far greater than that of the parasitism which has always existed in competitive Society.

A social parasite is a person whose contribution to the social product is less than the cost of his or her keep. If obviously defective we shall, at least for the present, let humanity override the economic instinct which suggests their removal — an instinct which has effectively operated in some overcrowded communities and take care of them. But the world has no use for the able-bodied parasite who during his or her working period of life does not contribute to the social dividend by personal exertion sufficient to pay for the kind of life which has been led. In opposing Socialism I am not defending parasitism. That can be got rid of when it becomes worth while and will be. But to jump out of parasitism into Socialism would be jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire. And we should have parasites still.

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So much for the Captains of Industry whom we need. But there is still another class which could not exist in the Socialistic state, and which a great part of mankind holds in profound disesteem, but which is essential nevertheless. This is the man with the instinct of accumulation and whom we stigmatize as the “Capitalist” — the man who grasps what is within reach and holds it; who often gets the main profits of the inventions of the inventor; who foresees the future value of unused gifts of Nature and acquires them while they can be got cheap; who combines with others like him to control everything controllable and makes mankind pay roundly when it wants it. He is really the man to whom mankind is most indebted of all for without his beneficent if execrated service, in vain would the scientist toil in his laboratory, the inventor struggle through poverty to perfect his machine, the Captain of Industry conceive great accomplishment, and the laborer delve and grind at his daily task. The one supremely useful man is he who accumulates and holds.

If you say that this is an unlovely person the answer is that sometimes he is and sometimes he is not. If you say he is selfish the reply is that we are all selfish — he merely being able to make his selfishness effective. If you say he accumulates by devious ways and by grinding the face of the poor the reply is that sometimes he does and sometimes he does not. In these human aspects he is about like the rest of us. He it is who makes happiness and helpfulness possible.

But to these and all other assaults upon the character and methods of the accumulating man there is one general reply and that is that from the economic standpoint they are of no consequence whatever. It makes no economic difference what he is or what he does so only that he performs his accumulating office.

The one essential fact is that he assembles within his grasp the savings of Society, prevents their dissipation in personal indulgence, applies them to beneficial use, and enables the laborer to produce under the direction of the Captain of Industry by means of the devices of the inventor applied to the formulas of the scientist what is needful for the welfare of mankind — and to live while he is doing it. It is the accumulating man impelled by his instinct, or if you please his lust, for wealth and power who makes it possible for poor men to live in any great number. If he happens also to be a Captain of Industry, which usually he is not, it is merely one middleman cut out. His essential function is that of the money-grabber. It is by his exercise of that function that most of us exist.

The third count in the indictment of Socialism is that by obliterating the Capitalist, accumulating by interest, profit, rent, and the exploitation of Nature for private gain, it would make life impossible to half the population of the world and not worth living to the fittest who should manage to survive.

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I trust I make myself understood for there is more and worse to come.

This discussion is necessarily didactic and assertive for it is impossible to prove or disprove any of these postulates. It is for that reason, and the lack of time that I cite no instances. They would be merely illustrative and not probative, for the human intellect is unequal to any adequate inductive study of the subject, and human life is too short to classify, master and digest the data even if they could be assembled. All that can be done is to state conclusions reached upon such observation and experience as is to each of us available and commend them to the judgment of others upon their observation and experience. Whatever can be proved at all can be reduced to a syllogism but agreement upon premises is in this case impossible.

But some things we do know and among them is the awful fact that man is powerless before Nature which deals with man precisely as it deals with other forms of life. Man can dodge Nature as the scale insect cannot, but higher forms of life can, and man the most effectively of all. But in the end she will get every one of us. Those will live happiest and longest who best know how to work with Nature and not against her. And individualism and not collectivism, is Nature's way. If our own object is the greatest aggregate of human comfort, we should realize that the greatest possible aggregate can only be attained when each individual under the stimulus of self-interest gets the largest measure of comfort for himself.

In the dim future which we shall not see, this may lead to conclusions which one shudders to think of. It may be that the time will come on this planet when in a decreasing population struggling for existence from the remains of an exhausted Nature, the greatest good of the greatest number will be found by the deliberate extinction of those least fit, that what is available may be reserved to those who can make best use of it. Astronomers tell us there are probably dead worlds whose spectrums tell us that they are of the same material as our own planet and presumably once the abode of sentient beings, for it is unthinkable that of all the worlds which occupy space which has no confines, the small planet which we inhabit alone supports sentient life. What tragedies darkened the last centuries of life in those dying worlds or what may happen to our own remote descendants happily we cannot know, but human experience does not enable us to conceive of any physical structure which does not ultimately resolve itself into its primal elements. On our own planet we know of forms of once vigorous life which utterly perished by reason of physical changes which we cannot comprehend, and that high civilizations one after another have risen, flourished, faded and become extinct while yet our own world was young, and who shall say what is in store for our own civilization?

If this is gruesome why should one be asked to present a subject which cannot be adequately presented without showing what pygmies we are and how helpless in the grasp of an all-powerful Nature.

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And the application of it all is that when Nature's sole and universal stimulus to progress is the love of self which she has implanted in every soul, it is folly to assume that we can better Nature's work by substituting for the universal stimulus to effort a more or less fleeting emotion which takes hold of but a very few and persists with but a still smaller number. Whatever scheme of collectivism we may establish, we know in advance that every member of the collective group will continuously strive to get for himself to the utmost limit regardless, if it could be discovered, of what is rightfully due. And a plan of Society which each member of Society is striving to subvert is doomed from its birth.

And the fourth count in the indictment of Socialism is that it is contradictory to Nature to such a degree as to make its permanence unthinkable because destructive not only of human comfort and happiness but of human life.

Expressed in briefest form the four counts are as follows[3]:

I. Public servants produce less for consumption than private workers. Decrease of consumption means increase of human misery. Therefore, Socialism, making all of us public servants would increase human misery.

II. Brains, not Labor, creates the social dividend. Ability is demonstrated only under strenuous competition inspired by self-interest. Therefore, Socialism, excluding competition inspired by self-interest would obliterate the social dividend.

III. The accumulating man inspired by selfishness is essential to any social saving. Social saving is essential to the support of an increasing population. Therefore, Socialism by eliminating the Capitalist would make life impossible to many who now live.

IV. To fight Nature is to die. Socialism fights Nature. Therefore, Socialism would destroy the race.

It is a matter of premises, and I have already said that the premises in these syllogisms can neither be proved or disproved. People, I suppose, will continue to fight over them but I shall not. No human life is long enough and no human intellect strong enough to demonstrate or disprove any one of them. Experimentally mankind is always somewhere trying out one or the other of these postulates but success or failure only proves that they did or did not prove true in that particular case.

An underlying fallacy of Socialism is the concept that poverty or at least extreme poverty, can be banished from the world. It cannot. It is impossible for the effective to produce and save as fast as the ineffective will waste and destroy if they can get at it. No truth in the Bible is more profound than the saying: "The poor ye have always with you."

The concept is based upon an unfounded belief in the competence of the average man. He is not nearly so competent an animal as he has taught himself to believe. We read our Nordau and with but the very slightest ability to judge what he says we declare him a libeler. We read our Le Bon and declare off-hand that it is absurd and wicked to say that the crowd has no more sense than a flock of sheep. When we hear of an alienist who cites the increase of murder, suicide and insanity as evidence that mankind is losing its mental balance, we declare that the man is crazy himself.

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I do not say that such men are or are not right or anywhere near right in the views they express, but I do say that they are writing in cold blood in the light of a great deal of exact knowledge and certainly are much better judges of the truth in those matters than most of us who dispose of them so brusquely.

The fact is that man, like other animals, differs greatly in individual ability but he differs from other animals in that the difference between the most competent and the least competent is enormously greater than such difference in any other species. The highest type of man is almost Godlike in the scope and keenness of his intellect. The lowest type reaches depths of degradation not touched by any other animal. There is no degradation so utterly degraded as a degraded mind.

If you ask what all this has to do with Socialism, the reply is that it has everything to do with it. The sole object which I have in this address is to impress upon you the concept of man as an animal in the grip of an all-powerful Nature, and differing from other animals solely in his greater ability to dodge and evade, and so prolong the processes through which Nature will surely get him in the end; to conceive of him also as subject to the same law which enthalls other animals, whereby the fittest who demonstrate their fitness in the economic struggle shall survive while the least fit shall perish; to conceive of him as prepared and inspired for the struggle by the love of self which Nature has implanted in his soul in order that the race may endure to the utmost limit possible for it, by the survival of those having the greatest capacity for happiness.

And, having fixed this conception in your minds, form your own judgment of the probable outcome of a contest which would begin by eliminating from man the one principle — selfishness — through which he must survive if he survives at all.

Thus far, I have dealt with the subject in icy cold blood as a purely economic problem wholly excluding all considerations of humanity. It must be dealt with in that way if we are to deal with it intelligently. What must be will be, however dearly we may wish it otherwise. But we do not wish to go home with ice in our souls, and let us see if we cannot find some reflections more comforting. I am sure that we can.

I have said that humanitarianism has no legitimate place in economic discussion and it has not. But it has a very large place outside economic theory and often in contact with economic results.

There may be economic gains which ought to be and will be surrendered for social gains, as long as we can do it and live. A very reliable test of the prosperity of a Society is the extent to which it can without distress, surrender economic goods in exchange for social goods.



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I have attacked Socialism, not Socialists. Multitudes of Socialists are most charming men and women, and the aspirations of pure Socialism are the noblest of which the human mind can conceive. How impossible they are of realization I think they are, I have endeavored to show. But there are individualists whose ideals are equally noble. Any conception that Socialists as a class are upon a higher ethical plane than individualists may be dismissed. Personally, I fear that at present the average ethical plane of Socialists is below that of opponents for the allurements of Socialistic theory have attracted to that cult a great number of the economically impotent, but nevertheless greedy, who know nothing and care less about Socialistic theory but lust for that which they have never earned. It is they who promote class hatred as well as class consciousness. They are an effective offset, morally, to the greedy and consciousnessless employers who nevertheless perform a useful economic function which the greedy among the Socialists do not.

But, my controversy at this time is not with them, but with the Socialistic idealists moved by the loftiest conception of the welfare of mankind and the most earnest desire to promote it. And now let us introduce somewhat of humanitarianism, which, while it has no place in economic theory, is that which most ennobles and beautifies human character. And here let me register my last attack upon Socialistic controversy, which is, that fundamentally it tends to degrade human character by adopting for, and applying to the manual workers of the world a contemptuous epithet. When Marx, if it was he, I am not sure, shouted: "Proletariat of all nations, unite" he said a very wicked thing. It is not my conception of the manual worker that he is a mere "child getter," but rather that he is as such, morally and socially the equal of any of us, from whose ranks there are continually emerging the leaders of thought, of discovery, of direction and of accumulation to whose abilities and activities all human progress is due, and I cannot hear without indignation suggestions from his own would-be leaders which impair his self-respect. I wish, for a concrete example, that the workingman should pay his poll tax and contribute to his occupational insurance with the rest of us, not to relieve Capital of a burden, but that the character of the working man himself may be strengthened by a conscious contribution to the upkeep of Society.

Our emotions are stronger than our reasoning powers, and as a matter of fact, collective human action is and during any period which we need consider will be controlled by humanitarian instincts and not by the rigidity of economic theory. Individually, we do and always shall, seek each his own particular interest. Collectively, we invariably consider the welfare of all. This has been particularly impressed on me during the last few years, during which I have presided over the deliberations of a

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large body of good citizens, probably about equally divided between the accumulating and non-accumulating classes. Whatever the individual practices and tendencies of the respective members, whenever after discussion the collective opinion is expressed on any social topic the vote is invariably substantially unanimous for that policy which those present believe will make for the general good. It is not true that the rich desire to oppress the poor. It is not true that there is any real conflict of interest between classes. It is true that there is a general desire for the general welfare. And it is also true that the general welfare will be surest and soonest attained by cooperation, and not conflict between classes, under the direction of those proved to be strongest and wisest.

I have said, and I am sure you must agree, that man economically differs from other animals mainly in his greater ability to evade the operation of Nature's own laws and to make use of the material resources and forces of Nature to assist him in so doing. And he does it mainly by collective action which is displayed most effectively and beneficently in those great economic organizations which we hate and stigmatize as "trusts" and which every one of us longs to get into as our best assurance of economic stability.

The problem is how to so regulate these economic regulators of Nature, that each shall get from their beneficent operation, not that which is his ethical due, for that we can never determine, nor would it be for the general welfare that each should receive his due, but that which each can receive without injury to Society.

It is certain that each will get less as the ages go by unless by our human ingenuity we can make production keep pace with population. At present, production greatly varies in different parts of the world, and the condition in each country is indicated by the amount of leisure possible to the average man. As population increases, leisure must decrease. If we work in a crowded community but eight hours per day, some will die among the weaker who would have lived if all had worked nine hours. The best index of the economic condition of any country is the amount of leisure which can be enjoyed by the average man without noticeable increase of mortality among the least efficient. The mortality tables have not yet been studied in their relations to this subject, but in time they will be. In Australia, mostly unsettled, the eight hour day is easy. If enforced in China the mortality would be awful. But then China has great but untouched natural resources to be developed by machinery devised elsewhere, and whose development will decrease mortality, while at the same time, at least for a long period, permitting more leisure. These conditions tend to equalize themselves throughout the world and in time the contest between humanitarian instincts and economic pressure will reach a world-wide equilibrium through the operation of natural law. What will happen then I do not know. Neither can any of us know.

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What we do know is that in each generation the aggregate of human happiness will be in a direct ratio with production per capita, up to the limit of the ability of the earth to produce food. We also know that the rate of production per capita will increase or decrease in a direct ratio with the amount of human energy devoted to production and not wasted in conflict, whether individual, class or international.

Each generation must work out its own problems in its own way. As population grows denser, individual freedom must more and more give way to collective restraint and direction. We in the cities have less freedom than those of the country, and the greater the city the more the individual impulse must be subordinated to collective control.

But we must never attempt to supplant individual selfishness, inspiring individual initiative and energy by any form of community ownership or direction which destroys or lessens opportunity for the more competent and especially the economically exceptional man. You would create thereby a machine operated by machinists for the accomplishment of machine purposes which are the purposes, good or bad as the case may be, of the individual operators who have never been and are not likely to be the economically competent.

For our generation the problem is, while not restricting either the opportunity or the reward of the economically competent, to compel the predatory and extortionate among them to behave decently, so that others of their class may do so without ruin — to which end, in my judgment, jail sentences and not fines will be most effective.

And likewise, to compel the ill-disposed and violent among the economically ineffective, to obey the laws or suffer the consequences.

To bother our heads much less about Social theories, whose premises it is impossible to establish, and much more about the practical relief of the unfortunate by both individual and collective action and suppression of parasitism among both rich and poor.

To encourage and promote the organization of interests, not for contention, but for cooperation.

To fully recognize, that only by personal exertion according to his ability does any one earn the right to live, but that the reward of exertion will be and should be apportioned, not in the ratio of energy displayed, but in that of its effectiveness and usefulness to Society.

To learn to differentiate between that reasonable discontent which is the mainspring of human progress, and that unreasonable discontent which is the destruction of Society.

And finally, each of us according to his ability and opportunity, to practice and inculcate respect for the law, the maintenance of order, regard for the rights of others, admiration

for the successful, sympathy with the unfortunate, charity for all, hope for humanity, joy in the simple life and contentment therewith.

[1] See Note 2.



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[2] The accuracy of this reference was challenged by a young Socialist, after the address. I have not read Capital for many years but think I cannot be far wrong in my statement and, in any case, the conception as stated, whether accurately Marxian or not, is the conception of all who give vitality to Socialism in this country. Hence, I do not take the time to verify my recollection. I am a busy man and it is no light thing to tackle Capital with intent to extract its precise meaning. Multitudes who have tried it have failed. Perhaps I was one of them. Of course Marx recognized the value of Labor other than manual, but his appeal was to manual workers and it is mainly they who have responded.

[3] Some of these counts would bear subdividing but they would come out all right. Any syllogism will come out all right when you assume the premises.

A Critique of Socialism

To the Ruskin Club

When your Mr. Bamford wrote me that the Ruskin Club was out hunting trouble, and that if I would come over here the bad men of the club would "do me up," I confess my first impulse was to excuse myself from the proffered hospitality. In the first place, as I have never posed as a social champion I had no reputation at stake and I was horribly afraid. Secondly, while my reading of Socialist and Anti-Socialist literature is the reverse of extensive, I am very sure that nothing can be said for or against Socialism which has not already been said many times, and so well said that a fair collection of Anti-Socialist literature would make a punching-bag solid enough to absorb the force of the most energetic of pugilists. Finally, the inutility of such a sally presented itself forcibly, since there is, so far as I know, no record of the reformation of a Socialist after the habit is once firmly established. But while at first these considerations were all against my putting on my armor, in the end the instinct of eating and fighting, which is as forceful in the modern savage, under the veneer of civilization, as in our unpolished progenitors, overcame all considerations of prudence, and here I am to do battle according to my ability. I promise to strike no foul blows and not to dodge the most portentous of whacks, but to ride straight at you and hit as hard as I can.

A Critique of Socialism

While it is doubtless true that no one can live in the world without in some degree modifying his environment, it is also true that the influence of a single person is seldom appreciable or his opinion upon Social questions of sufficient importance to excite curiosity, but I confess that when I listen to an address intended to be thoughtful, I enjoy it more or at any rate endure it better, if I have some knowledge of the mental attitude of the speaker toward his general subject. Thinking that possibly those who hear me this



evening may have the same feeling, I begin by saying that I earnestly favor a just distribution of comfort. I suppose that if I should analyze the mental processes leading to that wish, I should find toward the bottom a conviction that if each had his due I should be better off. The objection to the Socialistic program is that it would prevent a just distribution of comfort.



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Some years ago in a book of which I was guilty, I wrote the following: "There is implied in all Socialistic writing the doctrine that organized man can override, and as applied to himself, repeal the fundamental law of Nature, that no species can endure except by the production of more individuals than can be supported, of whom the weakest must die, with the corollary of misery before death. Competitive Society tends to the death of the weakest, Socialistic Society would tend to the preservation of the weak. There can be no question of the grandeur of this conception. To no man is given nobler aspirations than to him who conceives of a just distribution of comfort in an existence not idle, but without struggle. It would be a Nirvana glorious only in the absence of sorrow, but still perhaps a happy ending for our race. It may, after all, be our destiny. Nor can any right-minded man forbear his tribute to the good which Socialistic agitation has done. No man can tell how much misery it has prevented, or how much it will prevent. So, also, while we may regret the emotionalism which renders even so keen an intellect as that of Karl Marx an unsafe guide, we must, when we read his description of conditions for which he sought remedy, confess that he had been less a man had he been less emotional. The man whom daily contact with remediable misery will not render incompetent to always write logically, I would not wish to know. But it is the mission of such men to arouse action and not to finally determine its scope. The advocate may not be the judge. My animus is that I heartily desire most if not all the ends proposed by abstract Socialism, which I understand to be a perfectly just distribution of comfort. If, therefore, I am a critic of Socialism, I am a friendly critic, my objections to its progress resting mainly on a conviction that it would not remove, but would intensify, the evils which it is intended to mitigate." That is quite sufficient in regard to the personal equation.

There appear to be, unfortunately, as many sects of Socialists as of Christians, and if "Capital" were a more clearly written book I should be of the opinion that it would be as much better for Socialists if all other books on Socialism were destroyed as it would be for Christians and Jews if all books on Theology were destroyed, except the Bible. By Socialism I mean what some Socialist writers call "Scientific Socialism." "Marxism," it might be called. "Humanism," I think Marx would have preferred to call it, and I believe did call it, for he dealt with abstract doctrine applicable to men and not to nations, and his propaganda was the "International." Incidentally, as we pass on, we may notice in this connection the dilemma of American Socialists which they do not seem to realize. State Socialism has no logical place in a Socialistic program, for it merely substitutes the more deadly competition of nations for that of the individual, or even "trust" competition now existing, while Humanism, or Marxism, tends to a uniform condition of humanity which the American proletariat would fight tooth and nail because they would rightly believe that for them it would at present be a leveling down instead of leveling up.



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Karl Marx was, of course, not the inventor of Socialism, nor was he, so far as I know, the originator of any of its fundamental doctrines, — the doctrine, for example, that all value is derived from Labor was part of mediaeval clericism, — but he first reduced it to coherent form and published it as a complete and definite system, and upon the issues, substantially as he formulated and left them, must Socialism stand or fall.

I must assume the members of the Ruskin Club to be familiar with the Marxian fundamental propositions, which I do not state because I shall confine my attack to the three derived propositions about which discussion mainly centers. We certainly do not want an exercise in serious dialectics after dinner, but I will say in passing that I do not think that any of his fundamental propositions are true, or that his theory of value has a single sound leg to stand on, and as for what he calls “surplus value,” I doubt whether there be such a thing. At any rate he has not proved it, nor can it be proved, without taking into consideration the enormous number of industrial failures, as well as the more limited number of industrial successes — and there are no data for that purpose. I may also mention as what seems to me a fatal flaw in Socialistic philosophy, its concentration upon the conditions of Industrial Society, without adequate conception of a provision for the requirements of agriculture. Industrialism and commercialism are doubtless conveniences essential to our present civilization; but if every factory and all commerce were blotted from the earth the world would go right along, and when the necessary millions had perished in the adjustment, those remaining would be as happy as ever. Mankind adjusts itself to new environments very readily. We here in cities talking wisely on these things are wholly unnecessary. The farmer is essential, because without him we should starve. Nobody else is essential. We must not get the big-head. Economical farming on Socialistic methods is impossible, and any successful system of Social betterment must be based on the requirements of economical farming. Finally, to conclude this preliminary reconnaissance, the attitude of Socialism to religion is wholly unjustifiable. I am profoundly convinced that the groveling heathen, who in sincerity bows down to a “bloomin’ idol made of mud,” as Kipling puts it, has in him the propagation of a nobler and happier posterity than the most cultured cosmopolitan who is destitute of reverence. The Church and the Synagogue are the only existing institutions of modern Society which are engaged in the work of upbuilding and strengthening that rugged personal character which is the only sure foundation of any worthy civilization.

I do not discuss the fundamental Marxian propositions for two reasons. In the first place, it would be laborious beyond measure for me, and dreary beyond measure for you. For example, the bottom stone in the foundation of the sub-basement of the Marxian edifice is the proposition that the equation



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X commodity A=y commodity B essentially differs from the equation

y Commodity B=X Commodity A.

Now, a discussion whether there is between these two equations a difference which it is Socially necessary to take account of, is a thing to be put into books where it can be skipped, and not imposed in cold blood even on intellectual enemies. Personally I do not believe there is, for I do not think that Social phenomena can be dealt with by the rigorous methods of mathematics. One can never be sure that the unknown quantities are all accounted for. But whether this or similar propositions are essential to the discussion of the theory of surplus value or not, I do not describe them because they are of no particular importance.

Socialism is not based upon the Marxian theory of value, but the Marxian theory of value was evolved in an endeavor to fix a scientific basis for a popular movement already fully under way. Socialism is not based on reason, but emotion; not on reflection, but desire; it is not scientific, but popular. If every Socialist on earth should concede that the Marxian theory of surplus value had been knocked into smithereens, it would have no more effect on the progress of Socialism than the gentle zephyr of a June day on the hide of a rhinoceros. Socialism must be attacked in the derived propositions about which popular discussion centers, and the assault must be, not to prove that the doctrines are scientifically unsound, but that they tend to the impoverishment and debasement of the masses. These propositions are three, and I lay down as my thesis — for I abhor defensive warfare — that

Rent is right,
Interest is right,
Profits are right,

and that they are all three ethically and economically justified, and are in fact essential to the happiness and progress of the race, and more especially to those who labor with their hands.

Now, first, rent: I confess that I have no patience with any one who claims, as an inherent right, the exclusive ownership of any part of the earth. He might as well claim ownership in a section of air. In this I am very certain that I have the hearty concurrence of every member of this Club. I am so sure of this, in fact, that I am going to make that assumption, in which we all agree, the starting point of a little dialogue, in which, after the manner of Plato, I will put Socrates at one end of the discussion, and some of his friends, whom we will suppose to be Phaedo, and Crito, and Simmias, and the rest at the other, and we will let Socrates and Phaedo carry on the conversation, which might run as follows:



Socrates — We are agreed, then, that no man has any right inherent in himself to the ownership of land.

Phaedo — Certainly, we agree to that. Such a thing is absurd, for the earth is a gift to the human race, and not to particular men.

Socrates — I am glad that you think so, and am sure we shall continue to agree. And if no one man has any right to exclusive ownership of land, neither have any two men, since it is plain that neither could convey to himself and another any right which he did not possess, nor could two men together by any means get lawful title to what neither was entitled to hold.



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Phaedo — You are doubtless right, Socrates. I do not think any man could dispute that.

Socrates — And if neither one man nor two men can acquire lawful title to land, neither for the same reason could any number, no matter how great, acquire lawful title.

Phaedo — That certainly follows from what we have already agreed to.

Socrates — And it makes no difference how small or how great a portion of land may be. No man and no number of men can acquire lawful ownership of it.

Phaedo — That is also so plainly true that it seems hardly worth while to say it. It certainly makes no difference whether the land be a square furlong or a continent.

Socrates — As you say, Phaedo, that is very evident. The earth belongs to mankind, and all men are by nature sharers in its benefits.

Phaedo — I trust that you will understand that I agree with you in that, and so make an end of it.

Socrates — It is perhaps best that we be very sure that we agree as we go on, so that if we should at any time disagree, we do not need to go far back to find where our difference began. The earth is the property of men in common, and each has an undivided share in its possession.

Phaedo — That is another thing too plain to be disputed.

Socrates — And when men hold property in common, each has as much right to all parts of it as another.

Phaedo — To be sure. I do not see why we need waste time in mentioning things so plain and so trivial.

Socrates — And when men own property they may do with it as they please, and property which men own jointly they may visit and remain upon, the one as much as the other.

Phaedo — Unquestionably that is so, and we should do better to go to sleep in the shade somewhere, than to spend time in repeating things so simple.

Socrates — Be patient, Phaedo, and in time we may find somewhat wherein we do not so perfectly agree. But, whatever property men have the right to visit and remain upon, they are always free to use in common with their fellow owners.

Phaedo — Certainly. Will you never, O Socrates, have done with this?



Socrates — And Chinamen, therefore, have full right to come and live in California.

Phaedo (and the rest) — We will all see them in hell first.

And I am very certain that every Socialist in California will agree both with the premises and the conclusion.

But we might try another course of reasoning by which we may perhaps more easily reach the predetermined conclusion, and we will let the same parties carry on the dialogue, which is a most delightful way of reasoning when, as in the case of Plato and myself, the same person conducts both sides of the discussion. It might run in this way:



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Phaedo — We have come, Socrates, to discuss with you, if you will permit us, the question of the ownership of land. Crito and Hippias and myself and others were considering that subject the other day, and we were not able to agree. Hippocrates, whom you know, has lately returned from the region of Mount Olympus, and as he was hunting one day on the lower slopes of the mountain, he came, haply, upon a beautiful vale, fertile and well watered, wherein was no habitation or sign of man. The soft breezes blew gently over the rich green plain whereon the red deer grazed peacefully and turned not at his approach. And when Hippocrates returned from his hunt he found upon inquiry that no man of the region knew of that vale or had ever heard thereof. So, as he had marked the entrance thereto, he returned thither with the intent to remain there for a space. And remaining there through the warm summer he fenced in the vale and the deer in it, and built him a house, and remained there a full year. But certain concerns of his family at that time constrained Hippocrates to return to Athens, and since he can no more live in his vale he offered to sell it to Hipparchus for a talent of silver for a place to keep summer boarders. And Hipparchus was content; but when they repaired to the Demosion to exchange the price for the deed, Hippocrates was unable to produce any parchment showing his title to the vale. And when he was unable to do that, Hipparchus would not pay down his silver, until he could make further inquiry. The next day, we all, meeting at the house of Phidias, fell to debating whether Hippocrates owned the land and could sell it to Hipparchus. And some said one thing and some another, and in the end we agreed that when some of us were next together, we would go to the house of Socrates, and if he were content, we would discuss the matter with him. And today happening to so meet we have come to you, Socrates, and would be glad to hear whether you think Hippocrates owns that vale, and may sell it or no.

Socrates — You are very welcome, Phaedo, and your friends, and as for the matter you name, I shall be glad to talk of it with you and see if we can come to some understanding of it. But before we can proceed in the discussion, it will be necessary to find some starting point upon which we can all agree, because until we agree, at the beginning, upon some one thing pertaining to the matter, as certain and not to be doubted, discussion is useless, but if we can find such a thing, which none of us doubt, we may be able to make something of the matter. I propose, therefore, O Phaedo, that you propound someone statement which all you who have been discussing the matter believe.

Phaedo — Of a truth, Socrates, we discussed the matter till the sun went down, but I do not remember any one thing to which we all agreed except that there is such a vale at the foot of Mount Olympus, as Hippocrates describes, and that he lived therein for a year. That we believe because Hippocrates so told us, and all Athens knows Hippocrates for a truthful man.



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Socrates — That is something, for all truth is useful; but it does not seem to me to be such a truth as will well serve for a foundation from which we may penetrate, as one might say, the very bowels of the subject. I pray you to propound some other.

Phaedo — Truly, Socrates, I cannot, nor can we any of us, for upon nothing else pertaining to the matter are we able to agree.

Socrates — If it please you, then, I will propound a saying and see if you agree with me.

Phaedo — We shall be very glad if you will.

Socrates — I suggest, then, that we begin by agreeing, if we are able to do so, that the gods have given the earth to man for his use.

Phaedo — Surely that seems to be true.

Socrates — I am glad that you think favorably of it, but that is not sufficient if we are to reason upon it, because that upon which we found our argument must be what we accept as absolute truth.

Phaedo — I think the earth was made for mankind, but if in our conversation something should also seem true, and yet contradictory to that, I know not what I should think.

Socrates — Let us, then, think of something else: The earth is at any rate surely for the use of some beings. The mighty Atlas would never sustain it upon his broad shoulders if it did nobody good.

Phaedo — That, at least, is certain, Socrates.

Socrates — And it must be for beings who can make use of it and enjoy it.

Phaedo — That also is true.

Socrates — And beings which can use and enjoy the earth must be living beings.

Phaedo — Nobody will deny that.

Socrates — And there are no living things except the gods, mankind, the lower animals, and plants.

Phaedo — I agree to that.

Socrates — And it is plain that the gods did not build the earth for themselves, for they do not live upon it, except on Olympus, and nowhere does the earth produce ambrosia and nectar, which are the food of the gods.



Phaedo — That is true, for the gods live in the heavens and in the nether world, and not upon the earth.

Socrates — And the plants do not use the earth, or enjoy it, although they live upon it, but they are themselves used and enjoyed by man and beasts.

Phaedo — Certainly the earth was not made for the plants.

Socrates — And surely as between man and the lower animals, the earth was intended for man.

Phaedo — Certainly, that is what we think, but I do not know what the lion and the horse and the ox might say, for they certainly use the earth and enjoy it.

Socrates — But man is superior to the lower animals, and the superior cannot be subordinate to the inferior.

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Phaedo — I do not know how we can tell which is superior. The primordial cell in differentiating out of homogeneity into heterogeneity developed different qualities in different beings, and of the organs integrated from the heterogeneous elements each has its use and many are essential to life. In man the brain is more powerful than in the ox, but in the ox the stomach is more powerful than the brain, and while both stomach and brain are necessary, yet is one with a weak brain and strong stomach doubtless happier than one with a weak stomach and strong brain. Is it not, then, true that the stomach is nobler than the brain, and if so, then the pig and the lion and the goat, which have strong stomachs, nobler than man, whose stomach could in nowise digest carrion, or alfalfa, or tin cans, and therefore may it not be that the earth was made for the lower animals, who can use more of its products than man?

Socrates — That is a deep thought, O *Phaedo*, which shows that you are well up in your *Spencer*, although shy in your surgery, for it is true that the stomach has been removed from a man who lived happy ever after, while neither man nor beast ever lived a minute after his brains were knocked out; but, is it not true that it is by the function of the brain that man makes his powers more effective than those of animals stronger than he, so that he is able to bear rule over all the lower animals and either exterminate them from the earth or make them to serve him?

Phaedo — Yes, that is true.

Socrates — And we cannot say that the earth was made for beasts which themselves are made to serve the purpose of man, for as plants are consumed by beasts, so beasts are consumed by man who acquires for his own use and enjoyment whatever power is generated by the organs of all other living things.

Phaedo — That is true, and I can now see that the earth was not made by the gods for themselves, or for plants or beasts.

Socrates — Therefore, it appears to me that it must have been made for man.

Phaedo — That is true, and I now agree that the earth was made for man.

Socrates — Then, since we have found a common starting point, we may go on with our conversation. We have proved that the earth was made for man, because man, by powers inherent in himself, can overcome all other living things on the earth and subject them to his uses.

Phaedo — Yes, we have proved that.

Socrates — And the real source of his kingship is power.

Phaedo — That must be true.



Socrates — And force is power applied to some object, so that power and force may be spoken of as the same thing.

Phaedo — Certainly.

Socrates — And where power lies, there and there only is sovereignty, and where power ends sovereignty finds its limit. So that, for example, if the lion could subdue man and the other animals, the earth would be for the use of the lion.



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Phaedo — That is plain.

Socrates — And if a company of men should find an island and go and live upon it and be strong enough to subdue the wild animals and keep out other men, that island would be for their use.

Phaedo — That follows, because sovereignty goes with power exercised in force.

Socrates — And so if one man should find a vacant space and take possession, it would be his.

Phaedo — That is true.

Socrates — And what belongs to man, man may dispose of as he will.

Phaedo — All men agree to that.

Socrates — And, therefore, since Hippocrates has found a vacant space on the earth and taken possession thereof, and no man disputes his possession, it is his and he may sell it.

Phaedo — That is certainly true, and I do not doubt that Hipparchus will now pay down his talent of silver and take over the vale in the Olympian forest.

Socrates — And if instead of finding an island the company of men had found an entire continent it would be theirs if they were strong enough to keep it.

Phaedo — Surely that is so, for power is but concentrated ability to enjoy, and where most power lies, there lies most ability to enjoy, and therefore the highest possible aggregate of human happiness, in the attainment of which the will of the gods shall be done.

Socrates — And if a company can take part of a continent, but not the whole, whatever they are able to take is theirs.

Phaedo — Undoubtedly.

Socrates — And what is theirs is not the property of others.

Phaedo — By no means.

Socrates — And if it does not belong to others, others may not lawfully use it.

Phaedo — Surely not.

Socrates — And they who do own it may prevent others from entering it.



Phaedo — Surely, for hath not the poet said:

“That they shall take who have the power,
And they may keep who can.”

Socrates — Therefore it is plain that the United States may keep
Chinamen out of America.

Phaedo — There can be no doubt of it whatever.

Socrates — And Chinese may keep Americans out of China.

Phaedo — That is another story. One must never let his logic get the better of him.

And so we might play with these great subjects forever, with reasoning as leaky as a
sieve, but good enough to catch the careless or the untrained.

One of the most interesting lectures which I ever listened to was one before the
Economic League of San Francisco on the “Dialectics of Socialism.” The lecturer was a
very acute man, who would not for one moment be deceived by the sophistry of my
Socrates and Phaedo, but, who, himself, made willing captives of his hearers by similar
methods. I was unable to hear all his address, but when I reluctantly left, it appeared to
me that he was expecting to prove that Socialism must be sound philosophy because it
was contradictory to all human observation, experience, judgment and the dictates of
sound common sense — and his large audience was plainly enough with him.



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The dialectics of the schoolmen or their equivalent are useless in Social discussion. Social phenomena do not lend themselves to the rigorous formulas of mathematics and logic, for the human intellect is unable to discern and grasp all the factors of these problems. My travesty of Plato was intended to illustrate the difficulty of close reasoning on such topics.

Neither, on the other hand, are we to blindly follow the impulses of emotion which lead us to jump at a conclusion, support it with what reason we can, but reach it in any event. Emotion is the source of Social power, but power unrestrained and undirected is dangerous. Energy created by the sight of distress must be controlled by reason or it will not relieve distress. And by reason I do not mean Social syllogisms, of whose premises we are always uncertain, but conclusions half unconsciously formed in the mind as the result of human experience operating on human feeling — the practical wisdom which we call common sense. Human conduct, individual and aggregate, must be regulated and determined by the consensus of the judgment of the wisest made effective through its gradual acceptance as the judgment of the majority. Private ownership of land, with its accompanying rent, is justified, not by an imaginary inherent right in the individual, which has no real existence and so cannot be conveyed, but because the interests of Society require the stimulus to effort which private ownership and private ownership only can give. And here I shall leave this point without the further illustration and elaboration with which I could torment you longer than you could keep awake. And with the other two points I will confine myself to the most condensed forms of statement.

Interest — Socialists and non-Socialists agree that what a man makes is his. Socialists and I agree that every man is entitled to his just share of the Social dividend. I believe, and in this I suppose the Socialists would agree with me, that when a man gets his annual dividend he may use it, or keep it for future use. If, while he does not use his dividend, or the product of his labor, he permits others to use it to their profit, it seems to me that he is entitled to some satisfaction in compensation for his sacrifice. I believe it to the interest of Society that he have it. By individual thrift Society accumulates, and it is wise to encourage thrift.

If I build a mill and, falling sick, cannot use it, it is fair that he who does use it shall pay me for my sacrifice in building it. If I forego possible satisfactions of any kind, those whom I permit to enjoy them should recompense me. And that is interest. Its foundation as a right rests not only on those natural sentiments of justice with which the normal man everywhere is endowed and behind which we cannot go, but on the interest of Society to encourage the creation of savings funds to be employed for the benefit of Society.



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Profits — Private profit is far less a private right than a public necessity. Its absence would involve a waste which Society could not endure. With individual operations controlled by fallible men enormous waste is inevitable. It is essential to Society that this waste be minimized. No industrial or commercial enterprise can go on without risk. Profit is the compensation for risk. One of the things which I believe, but which cannot be proved, is that from the dawn of history losses to individuals by which Society gained have exceeded profits to individuals, and the excess of these losses is the Social accumulation, increased, of course, by residues left after individuals have got what they could. Whitney died poor, but mankind has the cotton-gin. Bell died rich, but there is a profit to mankind in the telephone. Socialists propose to assume risks and absorb profits. I do not believe Society could afford this. I am profoundly convinced that under the Socialist program the inevitable waste would be so enormously increased as to result in disaster approaching a Social cataclysm. This is an old argument whose validity Socialists scout. Nevertheless I believe it sound. The number of these whose intellectual and physical strength is sufficient for the wisest direction of great enterprises is very small. Some who are interested in our great industrial trusts are said to carry heavy insurance on the life of Mr. Morgan, lest he die and leave no successor. If the natural ability is found its possessor will probably lack the knowledge which Mr. Morgan^[4] has accumulated, and in the light of which he directs his operations. It is essential that great operations — and the business of the future will be conducted on a great scale — be directed by great wisdom and power. The possessors of high qualities we now discover by the trying-out process. They can be discovered in no other way, and great effort can be secured only by the hope of great reward. Until human nature changes we can expect nothing different. Socialism implies popular selection of industrial leadership. Wherever tried thus far in the world's history there has usually been abject failure. The mass can choose leaders in emotion but not directors of industry. The selection of experts by the non-expert can be wise only by accident. If the selection is not popular, then Socialism is tyranny, as its enemies charge. If it be popular, or in so far as it is popular, direction is likely to fall to the great persuaders and not to the great directors. Never did a "peoples party" yet escape the control of the unscrupulous. No political movements result in so much political and Social rascality as so-called popular movements originated by earnest and honest men. I see no reason to suppose that the Socialistic direction of industrial affairs in any city would be directed from any other source than the back rooms of the saloons where political movements are now shaped. If the Socialistic program were



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to go into effect tomorrow morning there would be here tonight neither lecturer nor audience. The good dinner would remain untasted in the ovens. Every mortal soul of us would be scooting from one Social magnate to another to assure that we were on the slate for the soft jobs and that nobody was crowding us off. I have no faith in human nature except as it is constantly strengthened and purified by struggle. That struggle is an irrepressible conflict existing in all nature, and from which man cannot escape. It is better for mankind that it go on openly and in more or less accord with known rules of warfare than in the secret conspiring chambers of the class which in the end controls popular movement. All serious conflict involves evil, but it is also strengthening to the race. I wish misery could be banished from the world, but I fear that it cannot be so banished. I have little confidence in human ability to so thoroughly comprehend the structure and functions of the Social body as to correctly foretell the steps in its evolution, or prescribe constitutional remedies which will banish Social disease. If I were a Social reformer — and were I with my present knowledge still an ingenuous youth in the fulness of strength with my life before me I do not know that I would not be a Social reformer — I would profess myself a Social agnostic, and prosecute my mission by the methods of the opportunist. I would endeavor to direct the Social ax to the most obvious and obtrusive roots of the Social evil, and having removed them and watched the result, would then determine what to do next. Possibly I would endeavor to begin with the abolition of wills and collateral inheritance, and so limiting direct inheritance that no man able to work should escape its necessity by reason of the labor of his forefathers. I might say that I recognized the vested rights of the Astors to the soil on Manhattan Island, but that I recognized no right as vested in beings yet unborn. I might say that it was sufficient stimulation and reward for the most eminent Social endeavor to select, within reason, the objects of public utility to which resulting accumulations should be applied and to superintend during one's lifetime their application to those purposes. I might think in this way, and might not, were I an enthusiastic Social reformer in the heyday of youth, but it appears to me now that at any rate we shall make most progress toward ultimate universal happiness if we recognize that out of the increasing strenuousness of our conflict there is coming constantly increasing comfort and better division thereof, and if we direct that portion of our energies which we devote to the service of mankind toward such changes in the direction of the Social impulse as can be made without impairing the force of the evolutionary movement, rather than to those which involve the reversal of the direction of the force with the resulting danger of explosion and collapse.

[4] This was written and originally printed long before the death of Mr. Morgan, but there is a general feeling that he has left no successor of his caliber.

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Here ends *The Inhumanity of Socialism*, being two papers — *The Case Against Socialism* and *A Critique of Socialism* — By Edward F. Adams. Published by Paul Elder and Company at their Tomoye Press, in the city of San Francisco, and seen through the press by John Swart, in the month of June, Nineteen Hundred & Thirteen

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