

PRICE TWOPENCE.

SOCIALISM

In Theory and Practice;

BEING

*A LECTURE DELIVERED TO A WORK-
ING CLASS AUDIENCE.*

BY

KARL PEARSON.

SECOND EDITION.



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[1884]

Note to Second Edition.

This lecture delivered early in 1884, and afterwards printed as a pamphlet, seems somewhat out of place in 1887. Things have been rapidly changing in the last three years. The discontent of the hand-workers has become greater and more manifest; if I read the times aright, we are still only at the threshold of the social crisis. The socialist of the market-place has accomplished many things, of which one only seems to me of real value. The "Church Parade" is a brilliant inspiration and will do much good if it brings home to our shepherds how completely they have been neglecting the herd in order to pipe to the dancing of their mistresses, Wealth and Power. On the other hand the need for a scientific exposition of evolutionary Socialism is as pressing and as unsupplied as ever. It is only after repeated request from the publisher that I have consented to a reprint in its present form of a pamphlet which has no claim to be a scientific treatment of a very difficult and urgent problem.

INNER TEMPLE,
MARCH 6TH, 1887,

K.P.

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To E. C.

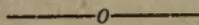
THIS lecture has been printed just as it was delivered. You would have wished it carefully revised. Other labour has hindered my touching it, and it now seems better to let its simple language stand. It was addressed to simple folk; had it been intended for a middle-class audience it would have adopted a more logical, but undoubtedly harsher tone. The selfishness of the 'upper' classes arises to a great extent from ignorance, but these are times in which such ignorance itself is criminal. The object of this pamphlet will be fulfilled should it bring home even to one or two that truth, which I have learnt from you, namely—that the higher socialism of our time does not strive for a mere political reorganization, it is labouring for a renaissance of morality.

K. P

INNER TEMPLE, CHRISTMAS EVE, 1884.

SOCIALISM:

IN THEORY AND PRACTICE.



DURING the past year there was a great deal of discussion in the newspapers—and out of them—concerning the dwellings of the so-called poor. Numerous philanthropical people wrote letters and articles describing the extreme misery and unhealthy condition of many of our London courts and alleys. The Prince of Wales got up in the House of Lords and remarked that he had visited several of the most deplorable slums in the Holborn district, and found them “very deplorable indeed!” The whole subject seemed an excellent one out of which to make political capital. The leader of the Conservatives wrote an article in a Tory magazine on the dwellings of the poor. He told us that things are much better in the country than they are in the towns, that the great landlords look after the housing of the agricultural labourers. It is the employers of labour, the capitalists, who are at fault. THEY ought to provide proper dwellings for their work-people. This was the opinion of Lord Salisbury, a great owner of land. But the Conservatives having come forward as the friends of the working-men, it seemed impossible, with a view to future elections, to let the matter rest there. Accordingly, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, a Radical leader and capitalist, wrote another article in a Liberal magazine, to

show that it is no business whatever of the employers of labour to look after the housing of their work-people. It is the duty of the owner of the land to see that decent houses are built upon it. In other words, the only men, who under our present social regime could make vast improvements, threw the responsibility off their own shoulders. "Very deplorable, indeed," said Lord Salisbury, "but of course not the landlord's fault; why does not that greedy fellow, the capitalist, look after his work-people?" "Nothing could be more wretched; I am sure it will lead to a revolution," ejaculated Mr. Chamberlain, "but, of course, it has nothing to do with the capitalist; why does not that idle person, that absolutely useless landlord, build more decent houses?" Then the landlord and capitalist for once agreed and thought it would be well to appoint a Royal Commission, which meant, that after a certain amount of philanthropic twaddle and a vast ocean of political froth the whole matter would end in nothing or an absolutely fruitless Act of Parliament.* Any change would have to be made at the cost of either the landlord or capitalist, or of both, and whether we like it or not, it is these two who practically govern this country. They are not likely to empty their pockets for our benefit. It is generally known how strong the interest of the landlords is in both Houses of Parliament, but this is comparatively small when we measure the interests of the capitalists. You will be surprised, if you investigate the matter, to find the large proportion of the House of Commons which represents the interests of capital. The number of members of that House who are themselves

* Three years afterwards we see it has ended in nothing—not even an Act

employers of labour, who are connected with great commercial interests, who are chairmen or directors of large capitalistic companies, or in some other way are representatives of capital (as well as of their constituents) is quite astounding. It is said that one large railway company alone can muster forty votes on a division; while the railway interests, if combined, might form a coalition which, in conceivable cases, would be of extreme danger to the State. I have merely touched upon this matter to remind you how thoroughly we are governed in this country by a *class*. The government of this country is not in the hands of the people. It is mere self-deception for us to suppose that all classes have a voice in the management of our affairs. The educative class (the class which labours with its head) and the productive class (the class which labours with its hands) have little or no real influence in the House of Commons. The governing class is the class of wealth, in both of its branches,—owners of land and owners of capital. This class naturally governs in its own interests, and the interests of wealth are what we must seek for would we understand the motive for any particular form of foreign or domestic policy on the part of either great State party.

It may strike you that I have wandered very far from the topic with which I started, namely, the dwellings of the poor, but I wanted to point out to you, by a practical example, how very unlikely it is that a reform, urgently needed by one class of the community, will be carried out efficiently by another governing class, when that reform must be paid for out of the latter's pockets. Confirmation of this view may be drawn from the fact that the governing class pretend to have discovered in 1884 only

that the poor are badly housed. There is something almost laughable in all the pother lately raised about the housing of the poor. So far as my own experience goes—and I would ask if that is not a fact?—the poor are not worse housed in 1884 than they were in 1874. The evil is one of very old standing. It was crying out for reform ten years ago, twenty years ago, forty years ago. More than forty years ago—in 1842—there was a report issued by a “Commission on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of Great Britain.” The descriptions given in that report are of a precisely similar character to what was put before the public in a little tract entitled the “Bitter Cry of Outcast London.” In that report we hear of 40,000 people in Liverpool alone living in cellars underground. We are told that the annual number of deaths from fever, generated by uncleanness and overcrowding in the dwellings of the poor, was then in England and Wales double the number of persons killed in the battle of Waterloo. We hear of streets without drainage, of workshops without ventilation, and of ten to twenty people sleeping in the same room, often five in a bed, rarely with any regard to sex. The whole essence of this report was to show that owing to the great capitalistic industries, the working classes, if they had not become poorer, had become more demoralized. They had been forced to crowd together and occupy unhealthy and often ruinous dwellings. The governing class and the public authorities scarcely troubled themselves about the matter, but treated the working classes as machines rather than as men. We see, then, that precisely the same evil was crying loudly for remedy in 1842 as it cries now in 1884. We ask why has there been no remedy applied during all these

years? There can only be two answers to that question; either no remedy is possible, or else those in whose power the remedy lies refuse to apply it. We must consider these two points.

Is no remedy possible? Not long ago a thinking Conservative (if such be not a contradiction in terms!) stated that although he recognised the deplorable misery of the poorer members of the working classes, he still held no remedy was possible. The misery might become so intense that an outbreak would intervene; still, when the outbreak was over, matters would sink back into their old course. There *must* be poor, and the poor would be miserable.* No violent revolution, no peaceful reform, could permanently benefit the poorer class of toilers. It was, so to speak, a law of nature (if not of God) that society should have a basis of misery. *History proved this to be always the case.*

It is to this latter phrase I want to call your attention—*History proved this to be always the case.* Our Conservative friend was distinctly right in his *method* when he appealed to history. That is peculiarly the method which ought to be made use of for the solution of all social and political problems. It is of the utmost importance to induce the working classes to study social and political problems from the historical standpoint. Do not listen to mere theory, or to the mere talk of rival political agitators. Endeavour, if possible, to see how like problems have been treated by different peoples in different ages, and with what measure of success. The study of history is, I am aware, extremely difficult, because the popular history books tell us only of wars and of kings, and very little of the real life of the people—

* This seems to be the doctrine recently expounded to "Church paraders," March, 1887.

how they worked, how they were fed, and how they were housed. But the real mission of history is to tell us how the great mass of the people toiled and lived; to tell us of their pleasure and of their misery. That is the only history that can help us in social problems. Does, then, history tell us that there always has been, and therefore always must be, a large amount of misery at the basis of society? The question is one really of statistics, and extremely difficult to answer; but, after careful investigation, I must state that I have come to a conclusion totally different from that of our Conservative friend. I admit, in the words of the man who worked for the poor in Galilee, that at all times and places "the poor are always with you"; but the amount of poverty as well as the degree of misery attending it has varied immensely. I have made special investigation of the condition of the artisan class in Germany some three to four hundred years ago, and do not hesitate to assert that anything like the condition of the courts and dwellings of poorer London was then totally unknown. If this be true, the argument from history is false. The artisan class has occupied a firmer and more substantial position in times gone by than it at present occupies. If it has sunk in the scale of comfort, it can certainly rise. In other words, a remedy for the present state of things does seem to me possible. Should any of you want to know why the working classes were better off four hundred years ago than they are at present, I must state it as my own opinion, that it was due to a better social system. The social system, so far as the workman was concerned, was based upon the guild, and the political system of those old towns was based as a rule upon the guilds. Thus the union which directed the workman in his work, and

brought his class together for social purposes, was practically the same as that which directed the municipal government of his city. If you would exactly understand what that means, you must suppose the trades unions of to-day to take a large share in the government of London. If they did so, how long do you think the dwellings of the poor would remain what they are? Do you believe the evil would remain another forty years? or that in 1920 it would be necessary to shuffle out of immediate action by another Royal Commission?

As I have said, the guilds of working men had originally a large share in municipal government. The city guilds, as you know, are still very wealthy bodies, and have great authority in the city. This is all that remains in London of the old system of working men's guilds taking a part in the management of the city's affairs.

In old days, then, the labouring classes were united in guilds and these guilds had a considerable share in local government. The social and political system was thus, to some extent, based upon *labour*. Such an organization of society, we call *socialistic*. The workmen of four hundred years ago were better off than are the workmen of to-day, because the old institutions were more *socialistic*—in other words, society was organized rather on the basis of labour than the basis of wealth. A society based upon wealth, since it grants power and place to the owners of something which is in the hands of a few individuals, may be termed *individualistic*. To-day we live in an *individualistic* state. I believe the workman of four hundred years ago was better off than his brother now, because he formed part of a *socialistic* rather than an *individualistic* system. I believe a remedy possible for the present

state of affairs, because history seems to teach us that the artisan has a firmer and happier position under a socialism than under an individualism. It also teaches us that some forms of socialism have existed in the past, and may therefore be possible in the present or future. I hold, and I would ask you to believe with me, that a *remedy is possible*. If it is, we are thrown back on the alternative that the governing class has refused or neglected to apply it. We have seen that the evil did not arise or did not accumulate to such an extent where society was partly based upon labour; we are, therefore, forced to the probable conclusion, that the evil has arisen and continues to subsist, because our social and political system is based upon wealth rather than upon labour—because we live under an individualism rather than under a socialism. It is the fault of our present social system, and not a law of history, that the toilers should be condemned to extreme misery and poverty.

We have now to consider the following questions:—What do we mean by *labour* and a *social system based upon labour*? By what means can we attempt to convert a system based upon wealth to one based upon labour; in other words, how shall we proceed to convert our present individualism into a socialism? In the latter question it will be necessary to include the consideration of the attitude which the artisan class should itself take with regard to organizations for socialistic change, and how it should endeavour to take political action especially with regard to the two great capitalistic parties.

Let me first endeavour to explain what I understand by labour. You may imagine, perhaps at first, that I refer only to labour of the hand—such labour as is required to make a pair of boots or turn

a lathe. But I conceive labour to be something of far wider extent than this. I conceive it to include all work, whether work of the head or of the hand, which is needful or profitable to the community at large. The man who puts cargo into a ship is no more or less a labourer than the captain who directs her course across the ocean; nor is either more of a labourer than the mathematician or astronomer whose calculations and observations enable the captain to know which direction he shall take when he is many hundred miles from land. The shoemaker or the postman are no more labourers than the clerk who sits in a merchant's office or the judge who sits on the bench. The schoolmaster, the writer and the actor are all true labourers. In some cases they may be overpaid; in many they are underpaid. Men of wealth have been known to pay the governess who teaches their children less than they pay their cook, and treat her with infinitely less respect. I have laid stress on the importance of labour of the head, because I have met working men—although few—who believed nothing but labour of the hand could have any value; all but labourers with the hand were idlers. You have doubtless heard of the victory gained last year by English troops in Egypt. Now, how do you suppose that victory was gained? Were the English soldiers a bit braver than the Arabs? Were they stronger? Not in the least. They won the victory because they were better disciplined, because they had better weapons—shortly, because what we may term their *organisation* was better. That organization was due to labour of the head. Now, what happened in Egypt is going on in the world at large every day. It is not always the stronger, but the better organized, the better educated man who goes

ahead. What is true of individual men is true of nations. The better organised, the better educated nation is victorious in the battle of life. We English have been so successful because we were well organized, because we were better educated than Hindoos, Zulus, and all the races we have conquered. You must never forget how much of that organization, that education, is due to labourers with the head. Some of you may be indifferent to the great empire of England, to this superiority of Englishmen, but let me assure you that, small as in some cases is the comfort of the English working classes, it is on the average large compared with that of an inferior race—compared, say, with the abject misery of the Egyptian peasant. I want, if possible, to point out to you the need for sympathy between labour of all kinds—that labourers with the hand and labourers with the head are mutually dependent. They are both true labourers as opposed to the idlers—the drones, who, by some chance having a monopoly of wealth, live on the labour of others. I would say to every man—“Friend, what is your calling, what are you doing for society at large? Are you making its shoes, are you teaching its children, are you helping to maintain order and forward its business? If you are doing none of this, are you relieving its work hours by administering to its play? Do you bring pleasure to the people as an actor, a writer, or a painter? If you are doing none of this, if you are simply a possessor of wealth, struggling to amuse yourself and pass through life for your own pleasure, then—why, *then*, you are not wanted here, and the sooner you clear out, bag and baggage, the better for us—and perhaps for yourself.” Do you grasp now the significance of a society based upon labour?

The possessor of wealth, simply because he has wealth, would have no place in such a society. The workers would remove him even as the worker bees eject the drones from their hive.

Society ought to be one vast guild of labourers—workers with the head and workers with the hand—and so organised there would be no place in it for those who merely live on the work of others. In a political or social system based upon labour it would be the mere possessor of wealth who would have no power; how far we are at present from such a socialism may be best observed by noting that wealth now has almost all political and social power—labour little or none.

We have now reached what I conceive to be the fundamental axiom of Socialism. *Society must be organised on the basis of labour*, and, therefore, political power, the power of organising, must be in the hands of labour. That labour, as I have endeavoured to impress upon you, is of two kinds. There is labour of the hand, which provides necessaries for all society: there is the labour of the head, which produces all that we term *progress*, and enables any individual society to maintain its place in the battle of life—the labour which educates and organises. I have come across a tendency in some workers with the hand to suppose all folk beside themselves to be idlers—social drones, supported by their work. I admit that the great mass of idlers are in what are termed the ‘upper and middle classes of society.’ But this arises from the fact that society, being graduated solely according to wealth, the people with the most money, and who are most idle, of course take their place in these viciously named ‘upper classes.’ In a *labour scale* they would naturally appear at the

very bottom, and form 'the dregs of population.' It is true the labourer with the head is, as a rule, better clothed, housed, and fed than the labourer with the hand, but this often arises from the fact that he is also a capitalist. Still, if the labourer with the head, *whose labour is his sole source of livelihood*, is better clothed, housed, and fed than the artisan, it does not show that in *all* cases he is earning more than his due; on the contrary, it may denote that the artisan is earning far less than his due. The difference, in fact, often represents the work which goes to support the drones of our present social system.

At this point I reach what I conceive to be the second great axiom of true Socialism. *All forms of labour are equally honourable.* No form of labour which is necessary for society can disgrace the man who practises it or place him in a lower social grade than any other form of labour. Let us look at this point somewhat more closely, for it is of the first importance. So long as the worker looks upon his work as merely work for *himself*—considers it only as a means to *his own* subsistence, and values it only as it satisfies *his own* wants, so long one form of work will be more degrading than another. To shovel mud into a cart will be a lower form of work than to make a pair of shoes, and to make shoes will not be such high-class labour as to direct a factory. But there is another way of regarding work, in which all forms of real labour appear of equal value—viz., when the labourer looks at his work not with regard to himself, but with regard to society at large. Let him consider his work as something necessary for society, as a condition of its existence, and then all gradations vanish. It is just as necessary for

society that its mud should be cleared from the streets, as that it should have shoes, or again, as that its factories should be directed. Once let the workman recognise that his labour is needful for society, and whatever its character, it becomes honourable at once. In other words, from the social standpoint *all labour is equally honourable*. We might even go so far as to assert that the lowest forms of labour are the *more* honourable, because they involve the greater personal sacrifice for the need of society. Once let this second axiom of true Socialism be recognised—the equality of every form of labour—and all the vicious distinctions of caste—the false lines which society has drawn between one class of workers and another—must disappear. The degradation of labour must cease. Once admit that labour, though differing in kind, as the shoemaker's from the blacksmith's, is equal in degree, and all class barriers are broken down. In other words, in a socialistic state, or in a society based upon labour, there can be no difference of class. All labourers, whether of the hand or the head, must meet on equal terms; they are alike needful to society; their value will depend only on the fashion and the energy with which they perform their particular duties.

Before leaving this subject of labour, there is one point, however, which must be noticed. I have said that all forms of labour are equally honourable, because we may regard them as equally necessary for society. But still the effects of various kinds of labour on the individual will be different. The man who spends his whole day in shovelling up mud will hardly be as intelligent as the shoemaker or engineer. His labour does not call for the same exercise of intelligence, nor draw out his ingenuity to

the same extent. Thus, although his labour is equally honourable, it has not such a good influence on the man himself. Hence the hours of labour, in such occupations, ought to be as short as possible; sufficient leisure ought to be given to those engaged in the more mechanical and disagreeable forms of toil to elevate and improve themselves apart from their work. When we admit that all labour is equally honourable, and therefore deserving of equal wage, then to educate the labourer will not lead him to despise his work. It will only lead him to appreciate and enjoy more fully his leisure. This question of leisure is a matter of the utmost importance. We hear much of the demand for shorter hours of labour; but how is the increased spare time to be employed? Many a toiler looks with envy upon the extravagant luxury of the wealthy, and cries, not unnaturally, "What right have you to enjoy all this, while I can hardly procure the necessaries of life?" But there is a matter in which I could wish the working classes would envy the wealthy even more than they might reasonably do their physical luxury—namely, their *education*: There is to me something unanswerable in the cry which the workman might raise against the wealthy—"What right have you to be educated, while I am ignorant?" Far more unanswerable than the cry—"What right have you to be rich while I am poor?" I could wish a cry for education might arise from the toilers as the cry for bread went up in the forties. It is the one thing which would render an increase of leisure really valuable to the workers—which would enable them to guide themselves, and assist society through the dangerous storms which seem surely gathering in the near future. Leisure employed in education, in self-

improvement, seems to me the only means by which the difference in character between various forms of labour can be equalised. This appears a point on which the labourers with the head can practically assist those with the hand. Let the two again unite for that mutual assistance which is so necessary, if between them they are to reorganise society into one vast guild of labour.

If we pass for a moment from the possibilities of the present to those of a distant future, we might conceive the labourers with the hand to attain such a degree of education that workers of both kinds might be fused together. The same man might labour with his pen in the morning and with his shovel after mid-day. That, I think, would be the *ideal* existence in which society, as an entire body, would progress at the greatest possible rate. I have endeavoured, then, to lay before you what I understand by labour; how all true labour is equally honourable and deserving of an equal wage. If many of the anomalies, much of the misery of our present state of society would disappear, were it organized on a socialistic or labour basis, it then becomes necessary to consider in what manner the labour basis differs from, and is opposed to, the present basis of wealth.

In order to illustrate what the present basis of wealth means, let me put to you a hypothetical case. Let us suppose three men on an island separated from the rest of the world. We may also suppose there to be a sufficient supply of seed and ploughs, and generally of agricultural necessaries. If now, one of the three men were to assert that the island, the seed, and the ploughs belonged to him, and his two comrades for some reason—or want of reason—accepted his assertion, let us trace what

would follow. Obviously, he would have an entire monopoly of all the means of sustaining life on the island. He could part with them at whatever rate he pleased, and could insist upon the produce of all the labour, which it would be possible to extract from the two men, in return for supplying them with the barest necessities of existence. *He* would naturally do nothing; *they* would till the ground with *his* implements, and sow *his* seed and store it in *his* barn. After this he might employ them in work tending to increase his luxuries, in providing him with as fine a house and as gorgeous furniture as they were capable of producing. He would probably allow them to build themselves shanties as protection from the weather, and grant them sufficient food to sustain life. All their time, after providing these necessaries for themselves, would be devoted to his service. He would be landlord and capitalist, having a complete monopoly of wealth. He could practically treat the other two men as slaves. Let us somewhat extend our example, and suppose this relation to hold between the one man and a considerable number of men on the island. Then it might be really advantageous for all the people on the island if the one man directed their labour. We may suppose him to be a practical farmer, who thoroughly understood his business, so, by his directing the others, the greatest amount possible would be produced from the land. As such a director of farming operations, he would be a labourer with the head, and worthy as any man under him to receive his hire. He would have as great a claim as any one he directed to the necessaries of life produced by the labourers with the hand. In a socialistic scheme he would still remain director; he would still receive his share of the produce, and

the result of the labour of the community would be divided according to the labour of its members. On the other hand, if our farm-director were owner of all things on the island, he might demand not only the share due to him for his labour of the head, but also that all the labour of the other inhabitants should be directed to improving his condition rather than their own. After providing for themselves the bare necessities of life, the other islanders might be called upon to spend all the rest of their time in ministering to his luxury. He could demand this because he would have a monopoly of all the land and all the wealth of the island; such a state of affairs on the island would be an individualism or a society based upon wealth. I think this example will show clearly the difference between a society based upon labour and one based upon wealth. Commonplace as the illustration may seem, it is one which can be extended, and yet rarely is extended to the state of affairs we find in our own country. We have but to replace our island-landowner and capitalist by a number of landowners and capitalists. These will have a monopoly of land and of wealth. They can virtually force the labouring classes, who have neither land nor capital, to administer to their luxury in return for the more needful supports of life. The limit of comfort to which they can reduce the labouring classes depends on the following considerations, which, of course, vary from time to time:—First, their own self-interest in keeping at least a sufficient supply of labour in such decent health and strength that it can satisfy their wants; secondly, their fear that too great pinching may lead to a forcible revolution; and, thirdly, a sort of feeling—arising partly perhaps from religion, partly perhaps from purely

mechanical sympathy—of dislike at the sight of suffering.

The greater demand there is for luxury on the part of the wealthy, the smaller is the time that the labouring classes can devote to the improvement of their own condition, the increase of their own comfort. Let us take a possible case, which may not be the absolute truth, but which will exemplify the law we have stated. Suppose that the labouring classes work eight hours a day. Now, these eight hours are not only spent in producing the absolute necessities of existence, and the degree of comfort in which our toilers live, but in producing also all the luxuries enjoyed by the rich. Let us suppose, for example, that five hours suffice to sow and to till, and to weave and to carry and fetch—shortly, to produce the food-supply of the country, and the average comfort which the labourer enjoys as to house and raiment. What, then, becomes of the other three hours' work? It is consumed in making luxuries of all kinds for the wealthy, fine houses, rich furniture, dainty food, and so forth. These three hours are spent, not in improving the condition of the labourer's own class, not in building themselves better dwellings or weaving themselves better clothes, nor, on the other hand, are they spent in public works for the benefit of the whole community but solely in supplying luxuries for wealthy individuals. The wealthy can demand these luxuries because they possess a monopoly of land and of capital, shortly, of the means of subsistence. This monopoly of the means of subsistence makes them in fact, if not in name, *slave-owners*. Such is the result of the individualistic as opposed to the socialistic system. We see now why the houses of the poor are deplorable—namely, because that

labour which should be devoted to improving them is consumed in supplying the luxuries of the rich. We may state it then, as a general law of a society based upon wealth—that *the misery of the labouring classes is directly proportional to the luxury of the wealthy*. This law is a very old one indeed; the only strange thing is, that it is every day forgotten.

Having noted, then, wherein the evil of the social system based upon wealth lies, we have lastly to consider how far, and by what means, it is possible to remedy it.

The only true method of investigating a question of this kind is, I feel sure, the historical one. Let us ask ourselves how in past ages one state of society has been replaced by another, and then, if possible, apply the general law to the present time.

Now, there are a considerable number of socialistic teachers—I will not call them *false* Socialists—who are never weary of crying out that our present state in society is extremely *unjust*, and that it must be destroyed. They are perpetually telling the labouring classes that the rich *unjustly* tyrannize over them, and that this tyranny must be thrown off. According to these teachers, it would seem as if the rich had absolutely entered into a conspiracy to defraud the poor. Now, although I call myself a Socialist, I must tell you plainly that I consider such teaching not only very foolish, but extremely harmful. It can arise only from men who are ignorant, or from men who seek to win popularity from the working-classes by appealing to their baser passions. So far from aiding true Socialism, it stirs up class-hatred, and instead of bringing classes together, it raises a barrier of bitterness and hostility between them. It is idle to talk of a conspiracy of the rich against the poor, of one class against another. A

man is born into his class, and into the traditions of his class. He is not responsible for his birth, whether it be to wealth or to labour. He is born to certain luxuries, and he is never taught to consider them as other than his natural due; he does as his class does, and as his fathers have done before him. His fault is not one of malice, but of ignorance. He does not know how his luxuries directly increase the misery of the poor, because no one has ever brought it home to him. Although a slave-owner he is an *unconscious* slave-owner. Shortly, he wants *educating*; not educating quite in the same sense as the labouring classes want educating, he probably has book-learning enough. He wants teaching that there is a higher social morality than the morality of a society based upon wealth. Namely, he must be taught that mere ownership has no social value at all—that the sole thing of social value is labour, labour of head or labour of hand: and that individual ownership of wealth has arisen in the past out of a very crude and insufficient method of representing such labour. The education of the so-called upper or wealth-owning classes is thus an imperative necessity. They must be taught a *new morality*. Here, again, is a point on which we see the need of a union between the educative and hand-working classes. The labourers with the head must come to the assistance of the labourers with the hand by *educating* the wealthy. Do not think this is a visionary project; two great Englishmen at least, John Ruskin and William Morris, are labouring at this task; they are endeavouring to teach the capitalistic classes that the morality of a society based upon wealth is a mere immorality.

But you will tell me that education is a very long

process, and that meantime the poor are suffering, and must continue to suffer. Are not the labouring classes *unjustly* treated, and have they not a *right* to something better? Shortly, ought they not to enforce that *right*? Pardon me, if I tell you plainly that I do not understand what such abstract 'justice' or 'right' means. I understand that the comfort of the labouring classes is far below what it would be if society were constituted on the basis of labour. I believe that on such a basis there would be less misery in the world, and therefore it is a result to be aimed at. But because this is a result which all men should strive for, it does not follow that we gain anything by calling it a 'right.' A 'right' suggests something which a man may take by force, if he cannot obtain it otherwise. It suggests that the labouring classes should revolt against the capitalistic classes and seize what is their 'right.'

Let us consider for a moment what is the meaning of such a revolt. I shall again take history as our teacher. History shows us that whenever the misery of the labouring classes reaches a certain limit they always *do* break into open rebellion. It is the origin, more or less, of all revolutions throughout the course of time. But history teaches us just as surely that such revolutions are accompanied by intense misery both for the labouring and wealthy classes. If this infliction of misery had ever resulted in the reconstruction of society we might even hope for good from a revolution, but we invariably find that something like the old system springs again out of the chaos, and the same old distinction of classes, the same old degradation of labour is sure to reappear. That is precisely the teaching of the Paris Commune or

again of the Anabaptist Kingdom of God in Münster. Apart from this the labourers with the hand will never be permanently successful in a revolution, unless they have the labourers with the head with them; they will want organization, they will want discipline, and this must fail unless education stands by them. Now, the labourers with the head have usually deserted the labourers with the hand when the latter rise in revolt, because they are students of history and they know too well from history that revolution has rarely permanently benefited the revolting classes. You may accept it as a primary law of history, *that no great change ever occurs with a leap*, no great social reconstruction, which will permanently benefit any class of the community, is ever brought about by a revolution. It is the result of a gradual growth, a progressive change, what we term an *evolution*. This is as much a law of history as of nature. Try as you will, you cannot make a man out of a child in a day, you must wait and let him grow, and gradually educate him and replace his childish ideas by the thoughts of a man. Precisely so you must treat society; you must gradually change it, educate it, if you want a permanent improvement in its nature. Feeling, as I do, the extreme misery which is brought about by the present state of society based upon wealth, I should say to the working-classes, 'Revolt,' if history did not teach me only too surely, that revolution would fail of its object. All progress towards a better state of things must be gradual. Progress proceeds by *evolution*, *not by revolution*. For this reason I would warn you against socialistic teachers who talk loudly of 'right' and 'justice'—who seek to stir up class against class. Such teaching merely tends towards revolution; and revolution

is not justifiable, because it is never successful. It never achieves its object. Such teachers are not true socialists, because they have not studied history; because their teaching really impedes our progress towards socialism. We might even take an example from our island with its landlord-capitalist tyrannizing over the other inhabitants. We have supposed him to be a practical farmer capable of directing the labours of the others. Now, suppose the inhabitants were to rise in revolt and throw him into the sea, what would happen? Why, the very next year they would not know what to sow or how to sow it; their agricultural operations would fail, and there would very soon be a famine on the island, which would be far worse than the old tyranny. Something very similar would occur in this country if the labouring classes were to throw all our capitalists into the sea. There would be no one capable of directing the factories or the complex operations of trade and commerce; these would all collapse, and there would very soon be a famine in this island also. You must bring your capitalist to see that he is only a labourer, a labourer with the head, and deserves wage accordingly. You can only do this by two methods. The first is to educate him to a higher morality, the second is to restrict him by the law of the land. Now, the law of the land is nothing more or less than the morality of the ruling class, and so long as political power is in the hands of the capitalists, and these are 'uneducated,' they are unlikely to restrict their own profits.

If, then, my view that we can only approach socialism by a gradual change is correct, we have before us two obvious lines of conduct which we may pursue at the same time. The first, and I am inclined to think the more important, is the educa-

tion of the wealthy classes; they must be taught from childhood up that the only moral form of society is a society based upon labour, they must be taught always to bear in mind the great law—that the misery of the poor is ever directly proportional to the luxury of the rich. This first object ought to be essentially the duty of the labourers with the head. Let the labourer with the hand ever regard himself as working in concert with the labourer with the head—the two are in truth but members of one large guild, the guild of labour, upon which basis society has to be reconstructed. The second line of conduct, which is practically open to all true Socialists, is the attainment of political power; wealth must cease to be the governing power in this country, it must be replaced by labour. The educative classes and the handworkers must rule the country; only so will it be possible to replace the wealth basis by the labour basis. The first step in this direction must necessarily be the granting of the franchise to all hand-workers. This is a very practical and definite aim to work for. Now, I have already hinted that I consider both great political parties really to represent wealth. Hence I do not believe that any true Socialist is either Liberal or Conservative, but at present it would be idle to think of returning socialistic members to Parliament.* Socialists will best forward their aims at present by supporting that party which is likely to increase the franchise. So that to be a true Socialist at present means, I think, to support the 'Liberal' Government. This support is not given because we are

* This was written in 1884. The extension of the franchise, incomplete as it is, has since considerably increased the possibility of returning socialistic members for at least one or two towns.

'Liberals,' but because, by it, we can best aid the cause of Socialism. But with regard to the franchise, there is a point which I cannot too strongly insist upon. If the complete enfranchisement of the hand-worker is to forward the socialistic cause he must be educated so as to use it for that purpose, Now, we have laid it down as a canon of Socialism that all labour is equally honourable; in a society based upon labour there can be no distinction of class. Thus, the true Socialist must be superior to class-interests. He must look beyond his own-class to the wants and habits of society at large. Hence, if the franchise is to be really profitable, the hand-worker must be educated to see beyond the narrow bounds of his own class. He must be taught to look upon society as a *whole*, and respect the labour of all its varied branches. He must endeavour to grasp the wants and habits of other forms of labour than his own, whether it be labour of the head or of the hand. He must recognize to the full that all labour is equally honourable, and has equal claims on society at large. The shoemaker does not despise the labour of the blacksmith, but he must be quite sure that the labour of the school-master, of the astronomer, and of the man who works with his brains, is equally valuable to the community. Here, again, we see how the labourer with the head can come to the assistance of the labourer with the hand. In order that the franchise may be practically of value to the artisan, he must grasp how to use it for broader purposes than mere class aims. To do this he requires to educate himself. I repeat that I should like to hear a cry go up from the hand-workers for *education and leisure for education*, even as it went up forty years ago for bread. For the mind is of equal importance with the stomach

and needs its bread also. Apart from the franchise, there is another direction in which, I think, practical steps might be taken, namely, to obtain for trades-unions, or rather, as I should prefer to call them, labour-guilds—a share or influence in municipal government. Let there be a labour-guild influence in every parish, and on every vestry. As I have said before, I cannot conceive that the housing of the poor would be what it is if the trades unions had been represented in the government of London. Such a representation would be the first approach to a communal organization based upon labour, and ultimately to a society on the same basis. You can hardly support your trades-unions too energetically, and you have in this respect taught the labourers with the head a lesson. These labourers with the head are just beginning to form their labour-guilds too—guilds of teachers and guilds of writers—and it is to these labour guilds, and to your trades-unions that we must look for much useful work in the future.

These surely are practical aims enough for the present, but I may perhaps be allowed to point out to you what direction I think legislative action should take, supposing the franchise granted to all hand-workers. As I have endeavoured to show, any sudden change would be extremely dangerous; it would upset our old social arrangements, and would not give us any stable new institutions. It would embitter class against class, and not destroy class altogether. We must endeavour to pass gradually from the old to the new state; from the state in which wealth is the social basis to one in which labour is the sole element by which we judge men. Now, in order that wealth should cease to be mistress, her monopoly of the means of sub.

sistence must be destroyed. In other words, land and capital must cease to be in the hands of individuals. We must have nationalization of the land and nationalization of capital. Every Socialist is a land-nationalizer and a capital-nationalizer.

It will be sufficient now to consider the first problem, the nationalization of the land. Mr. George says, take the land and give *no compensation*. That is what I term a revolutionary measure; it attempts to destroy and reconstruct in a moment. If history teaches us anything, it tells us that all such revolutionary measures fail; they bring more misery than they accomplish good. Hence, although I am a land-nationalizer—as every Socialist must be—I do not believe in Mr. George's cry of 'No compensation.' Then we have another set of land-nationalizers, who would buy the landlords out. Let us see what this means. The landlords would be given, in return for their lands, a large sum of money, which would have to be borrowed by the nation, and the interests on which would increase for ever the taxes of the country. In other words, we should be perpetuating the wealth of the landlords and their claims to be permanently supported by the classes that labour. That is not a *socialistic* remedy. It would seem, at first sight as if there were no alternative—either compensation or no compensation. Yet I think there is a *third* course, if we would only try to legislate for the future as well as for the present. Suppose a bill were passed to convert all freehold in land into a leasehold, say, of 80 to 100 years, from the nation. Here there would be no question of compensation, and little real injury to the *present* landowner, because the difference between freehold and a hundred

years' leasehold (at least in towns) is comparatively small. At the end of a hundred years the nation would be in possession of all land without having paid a penny for it, and without violently breaking up the present social arrangements. In less than 100 years with the land slipping from their fingers the children of our present landowners would have learnt that, if they want to live, they must labour. That would be a great step to true socialism. Precisely as I propose to treat the land I would treat most forms of capital. With the land, of course, mines and factories would necessarily pass into the hands of the nation. Railways would have to be dealt with in the same fashion. The present companies would have a hundred years' lease instead of a perpetuity of their property.

These are merely suggestions of how it might be possible to pass to a stable form of society based upon labour—to a true socialism. The change would be stable because it would be gradual; the state would be socialistic because it would be based upon labour; while wealth, in its two important forms—land and capital—would belong alone to the nation.

Some of you may cry out in astonishment, "But what is the use of working for such a socialism, we shall never live to see it, we shall never enjoy its happiness." Quite true, I reply, but there is a nobler calling than working for ourselves, there is a higher happiness than self-enjoyment—namely, the feeling that our labour will have rendered posterity, will have rendered our children free from the misery through which we ourselves have had to struggle; the feeling that our work in life has left the world a more joyous dwelling-place for mankind than we found it. The little streak of improvement which

each man may leave behind him—the only immortality of which mankind can be sure—is a far nobler result of labour, whether of hand or of head, than three-score years of unlimited personal happiness.

