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# What Socialists Think.

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by Charles H. Kerr

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## What to Read on Socialism.

That is the question for every thinking American today. There was a time, not so very long ago, when “practical” men passed the subject by, as fit only for dreamers. That time has gone by.

A poetic reformer once said, “The dreams that nations dream come true.” That is so, but there is a reason for it that can be stated in very plain prose, namely, that the new ideas that spring up in a nation arise because material conditions have become different from those under which the old ideas took shape, so that people are obliged to do new thinking if they are to keep on living.

The task of the 19th Century the world over, but especially in America, was to find new and effective ways of working, by which the forces of nature could be used in the service of man. The success with which this has been carried out is none the less wonderful because familiar. Human labor in the various lines of production is now ten, a hundred, often a thousand times as effective as when the 19th Century dawned.



Yet the people who do the work are scarcely more comfortable and far less sure of a living than were their ancestors of a hundred years ago. But the people who do the owning have increased their wealth and power at the same breathless speed in which the production of wealth by the laborers has increased.

Now the laborers have come to see that this is so; they have come to see that their only hope is to unite as a class to control the government and the wealth they make. The international movement of the working class to this end is called Socialism.

Meanwhile the great capitalists and their intellectual hirelings see even more clearly than the laborers the irrepressible conflict just ahead. They realize perfectly well that Socialism is

not a dream; it is a fact to reckon with.

The class struggle is here. You may wish it were not here, but your wish makes not the least difference in the facts of the case. It will soon be necessary to take sides, with the working class for Socialism or with

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the owning class against it. Thinking men and women will prefer to study Socialism so as to make it an intelligent choice. And thinkers who have taken their stand on the socialist side will feel the need of study to qualify themselves to defend their principles against all comers.

The object of this book is to give a brief summary of the ideas accepted by the Socialist Party of America, in common with the international socialist movement of the entire world, and to direct readers to the best literature that is within the reach of those wishing to study Socialism.

### *Central Ideas of Socialism.*

#### **I.— How We Explain People's Actions.**

Underlying the whole literature of International Socialism is the principle described in different phrases as Economic Determinism, Historical Materialism, or the Materialistic Conception of History. The names may sound hard, but the theory itself is simple enough, so simple that the reader may wonder why it had to be discovered, or why anyone should ever have doubted it. Yet the theory in any developed form was first stated in the *Communist Manifesto*, by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, issued in the year 1848.

What it means is this: if people are to live, they must eat, and if they are to live in a climate like that of the northern parts of the United States, they must have clothes, shelter, and fuel. Not only is this true now, but it has been true for thousands of years. So, no matter how different people may be otherwise, they are all alike in this: that they all want the things that we call the necessities of life. For if any child should be born without such strong desires, such a child would be pretty sure to die before reaching the age for bringing children into the world, and each child inherits to a large extent the desires of its parents.

So people all want these useful things. But they have not always been able to get them in the same way, and the way in which they do get them makes all the difference in the world about their way of thinking on almost every subject. And right here is a chance for a serious misunderstanding of the Socialist idea. It is not the way in which one particular person gets his

food that makes him think in a particular way; it is the way in which a whole society of people get their food, and also the way their fathers and grandfathers did it, that makes them all think in one general way.

For example, here in Illinois 60 or 75 years ago, the way our grandfathers got their living was to go out on government land, take up a homestead which became theirs after doing a little work on it, and go to raising corn. There was no expensive machinery; there were no railroads; their labor was not productive compared with labor today, but what they did produce was theirs to keep. So it was usually the case that anyone who was willing to work could live in comfort and gradually get together a little property, and it was natural to think that if one man here and there remained poor he must be to blame for not working so hard as the others, or for wasting what he had earned.

Now the grandchildren of these same farmers have in many cases worked along in the same fashion as their grandfathers, but things have gradually become easier for them. Railroads have been built, machinery has been manufactured which does most of the work that used to be done by hand; millions of laborers who own no land have come into the state and are exchanging their labor in many forms for the food these farmers raise. So now it is no longer necessary for these fortunate ones to do the same hard work their grandfathers did. They can rent their land and live from the labor of the tenants, or they can sell it and with the money buy in some form or another some of the tools that the landless laborers have to use, and so live from their labor. But all the while it is perfectly natural for them to cling to the ideas of their grandfathers, which were formerly true but have ceased to be true, namely, that if a man could not earn enough to live in comfort it was because he was lazy and shiftless, and that those are comfortable who are useful to the community.

Meanwhile a new set of ideas has grown up among the great mass of the people who were not so fortunate in having grandfathers who got here first. They realize that they are working hard and producing vast wealth they do not get; they realize that something is wrong, even though they cannot tell just what it is; they are discontented and ready to rebel as soon as they can see what is the matter. Socialism can tell them what is the matter, but that part of the subject belongs to our next leaflet.

All through history, the way people got their food has shaped their ideas. At first it was so hard for them to get their food that they could think of little else. Sometimes food was even so scarce that they had to eat each other, or the most highly developed tribes would have died out. Then cannibalism was “right,” because it was for the best interests of society.

But gradually men learned by applying labor to the land to get far more food from the same amount of land than ever before. Then it became “wrong” to eat prisoners taken in war; the “right” thing was then to make them work for the benefit of their captors. Then human progress became rapid, for from that time there was a class of men who did not have to think exclusively about how to produce enough food to keep them alive the next day or year; they could begin to apply their brains to the more complete conquest of the earth. The sentimentalist says slavery was always and eternally wrong; the Socialist says that slavery was right in its time, but that its time has gone.

Now for the first time in all the history of the universe man’s command over nature has reached the point where if the labor of all were intelligently applied for an average of two or three hours a day, everyone would have enough and to spare.

This is not a fine-spun theory; it is a straightforward statement and explanation of known facts. Ideas do not make facts, but facts make ideas, and the ideas born of these facts that we have just been examining are some of the ideas that go to make up Socialism....

## II.— How the Laborer Makes Surplus Value and How the Capitalist Gets It.

It was in 1867 that Karl Marx published the first volume of *Das Kapital*. He was a German exile in England — the country which at that time had the most highly developed capitalism in the world. Naturally the English students had also worked out the most highly developed system of “political economy” that had yet been known. Marx was thoroughly familiar with their literature; he accepted all that was sound in their teachings, and carried them to their logical and revolutionary conclusions.

The problem of the economists was to discover the way in which wealth could be accumulated by a nation, or, as they really meant, by the capitalists of a

nation. They had discovered that wealth consisted in “commodities,” that is, useful things that could be bought and sold, and that had been produced by human labor. They had also discovered that when these things were exchanged, bought, or sold, the value of each article, that is, the quantity of other articles that it would bring in exchange, depended on the amount of labor that had been put into it.

Marx accepted this position in common with the other writers of the time, and illustrated it in this way: One coat, 10 pounds of tea, 40 pounds of coffee, 10 bushels of wheat, 2 ounces of gold, half a ton of iron are each equal in value to 20 yards of linen and to each other. These commodities are all the result of different kinds of labor, but the thing that makes it possible to compare them is that each is the product of the same quantity of average human labor, and thus has the same value.

In highly developed capitalism, one commodity, gold, is set apart to serve as the measure of value of all other commodities, and the value of these expressed in terms of gold is called their price. This price, then, depends on the amount of labor that has gone into the commodity.

So when a capitalist buys a commodity he gives of it an amount of gold proportionate to the labor that has gone into it. But how, then, can he make a profit by buying and selling? How can he get “a return on his capital?”

That is the riddle that Marx has solved, and his solution is one that every laborer should understand. I will try to state it as simply as possible.

The laborer, like the capitalist, goes into the market to buy and sell. He must buy the food, clothing, and shelter that he needs to maintain his life and the life of his children. If possible, he will buy other commodities that he desires. But he has only one thing to sell, and that is his labor-power.

The price he can get for this labor-power will depend on its cost, like the price of any other commodity. And the cost is just enough to support him according to the standard of living customary among the laborers at the time and place where he is, including the cost of bringing up children to supply the labor market when he is worn out.

The capitalist who is a manufacturer buys this labor-power, just as he buys his raw material, his coal,

etc. And he has a very good reason for buying this labor-power, for it has a remarkable property. When he uses it, in connection with the machinery of production, it will add more value to the material it is applied to than what it cost the capitalist; in other words, the product is equal to the material used, plus the fuel, lubricating oil, and incidentals used up in the process, plus the wear and tear on the machinery and buildings, plus the wages paid to the laborers — all these and something more, and to that something more Marx gives the name SURPLUS VALUE.

He illustrates in this way: A laborer works in a cotton mill for twelve hours a day and spins twenty pounds of cotton into yarn. The yarn sells for 30 shillings. The cotton cost 20 shillings. The laborer receives 3 shillings in wages. The value of the machinery used is diminished by wear and tear to the extent of 4 shillings. There is thus a difference of 6 shillings between the value of the product and the value of the materials of all kinds that are used up in the twelve hours. Now the laborer receives for his wages 3 shillings. This leaves a SURPLUS VALUE of 3 shillings which goes to the capitalist.

We will assume that 3 shillings, under the conditions of labor in England in 1867 and in South Carolina today, is enough to enable the laborer to live, so he is willing to work for this amount. But in six hours he can put enough value into the cotton to repay the capitalist for his wages, then he works six hours more and creates SURPLUS VALUE for the capitalist.

This is the way the capitalist makes his profit. I do not mean to imply that the rate of profit is always 100%, as in the example chosen. It varies of course according to circumstances. In the most highly developed industry, where machinery is most perfect, as in the plants of the steel trust, it is far higher. In the backward industries where simple tools are used, it is far less.

Again, it should not be understood that this profit goes in the main to the individual employer, particularly to the small employer. On the contrary, the small employer usually finds his surplus value to be taken away from him by those stronger than himself, and the tendency is for them to take away also his means of production and force him into the ranks of the wage laborers.

In pointing out the nature of surplus value, we

Socialists do not assert that the wage system was always wrong, nor that the capitalists who uphold it today are "bad." The wage system in its time was a distinct advance upon the forms of production which had preceded it. Under this system production has become far more efficient than ever before. A day's labor in many lines of industry will produce ten, a hundred, even a thousand times as much wealth as under more primitive methods. But two things should be noted:

First, the capitalist, who was in the early stages of machine production the brain that directed the whole process, has, through the growth of corporations and trusts, become reduced to a do-nothing stockholder or bondholder, and the direction of the productive process has passed over entirely to wage laborers.

Second, every improvement in machine production has increase the share of the product that goes to the capitalist, while the laborer gets only a trifle more in the comforts of life for his labor than a generation ago. This he begins to see, and he becomes rebellious, and the consequence is THE CLASS STRUGGLE, of which we shall speak presently....

### **III.— The Class Struggle Between Workers and Owners.**

We have seen that people's political institutions and their moral ideas are the direct result of the way the people get their living — taken in connection with the way their fathers and grandfathers get their living. We have also seen how the laborers today get their living by creating surplus value for the capitalists.

Put these two thoughts together and what do they suggest? Here we have on the one side a class of capitalists living in luxury on the labor or others. Yet no one capitalist is forcibly robbing any one laborer. Quite possibly each capitalist, or at least the father or grandfather of each capitalist, has been a laborer himself. So these capitalists and their hangers-on persuade themselves and also persuade the less intelligent laborers that wealth is the natural reward of virtue and efficiency.

On the other hand the more intelligent laborers feel that they are being robbed of what they earn. They realize that the modern machinery now used makes their labor immensely more productive than labor used

to be, yet they see that they are receiving as their wages a far smaller portion of the product than ever laborers received before.

So the class struggle is on. Socialists do not make it; they simply explain it, and point out the lines on which it must develop. Thus far the chief weapon of the laborers has been the labor union, and the fighting has been through strikes and boycotts. In the day of the small capitalist, real gains were made by the unions. The employers who was making a large profit off his laborers while selling his product in competition with the product of other employers could often better afford to grant an increase of wages than to shut down and let his customers be taken away by his rivals.

The trust has changed all this. In the leading lines of production there are no more rivals. In an ever increasing number of trades the trust is the sole employer. In time of "prosperity" it can well afford to pay its workmen enough to enable them to live according to the prevailing standard of comfort. In times of depression it can reduce wages at its pleasure and the unions are helpless to resist.

Every improvement in machinery enables each laborer to turn out a larger product than before in the same number of hours, and thus the employer is able to do without a part of his laborers. These displaced laborers make up the "army of the unemployed." If the workmen employed by a trust go on strike, a new force of workmen can soon be organized out of that army.

It is natural under such circumstances for the unions to resort to force, but here the capitalists are ready for them with superior force. The powers of government in America and in every other "civilized" country are at the disposal of the capitalist when a contest is on with the laborer.

Thus by the logic of events the class struggle has inevitably been shifted to the ballot box. Here must be fought out the question of who shall rule, those who live by owning or those who live by working.

Let us take a look at the forces ranged on each side. The capitalists would have you believe that the battle is between hand workers on one side and brain workers on the other. But such an assumption is wholly untrue, and it is in direct conflict with the Marxian ideas that we are studying.

We have seen that classes of men are mainly

moved by the economic conditions under which they get their bread. Now apart from begging there are just two ways to get bread and the other necessities of life under our present society. One way is to work with hand and brain. The other way is to own things and by this ownership to get hold of the wealth made by someone else. It is of course possible for one person to do both. It used to be more common than it is. It will soon be less common than it is. The lines are being drawn more and more clearly between those who live by working and those who live by owning.

Once the employer was a laborer who worked in a little shop along with the other laborers to whom he paid wages.

Later, he was a superintendent who did not work with his own hands, but day by day directed the labor of the others to make it more efficient.

Still later, he hired a workman to do the superintending, while he went into the market to buy the raw material and sell the product.

Lastly he has sold his factory to a trust and has received in payment a block of dividend-paying stock or a bunch of interest-drawing bonds. Now he never needs go near the factory; he may live where he likes and spend his income as he pleases. All the buying and selling, all the account-keeping and planning, all the brain work as well as the hand work, is done by hired wage-laborers. And the income he draws and spends without working is made possible only by the fact that those who are doing the work are getting for it less than they really earn.

So when the battle lines are drawn for the final contest between the capitalist and the laborer, there will be on the side of the capitalist only those who live by owning and those who can be fooled, or bribed, into voting against the interests of the class to which they really belong.

On the other side will be those who live by their labor. The distinction between bodily and mental labor is really an outgrown distinction like that between body and "soul." There is no bodily labor without mental labor. If a ditch-digger were to put no intelligence into his work he could not hold his job. And there is no mental labor without bodily labor. No matter how sharp or unscrupulous a corporation attorney may be, he cannot earn his big fee without the bodily labor of dictating his legal papers and then ex-

aming them.

Again, it is absurd to attempt to draw a line between useful work and useless work under capitalism and to set those who do useless work on the side of capital. Useful work is that which satisfies the desires of somebody that has the price, and under our present system, when each member of the working class must find a purchaser for his labor-power if he is to stay on the earth, it is foolish to count a man as being on the capitalist side because he has to earn his week's pay by setting jewels in a poodle dog's collar or adding up columns of figures in a bank.

And not all workers are employed on a weekly wage. When the railroad corporations received from their government millions of acres of fertile lands, they did not hire wage-workers to go on those lands and raise crops for them. That was because they found that by selling the land to farmers who thought they were going to become wealthy by their labor they could get a great deal more out of each farm in interest and freight charges than by hiring laborers to work it. And these Western farmers are working longer hours for smaller pay than the average city laborer. What is more, they are as ready to rebel.

The small shopkeeper is also in the same boat. If he is stupid, he may think of himself as a capitalist, but if he is at all bright he is coming to see that his "profit" is nothing more or less than wages, and usually very low wages, for the labor he expends in taking care of his shop and selling goods. So his material interests really lead him to favor the social revolution that will bring him better wages and shorter hours of labor.

Thus we see that in the class struggle that is daily growing more intense, only those who live by owning, less than 10% of the people, have anything to gain by upholding the present social system, while those who live by working, more than 90% of the people, have in the words of the *Communist Manifesto*, nothing to lose but their chains, and all the world to gain, by helping to overthrow the capitalist class and establish the Cooperative Commonwealth....

#### IV.— The Cooperative Commonwealth.

The class struggle between workers and owners can have only one possible ending. The end may be

very near or very far, but sooner or later the great mass of the people who do the work will see that their own separate interests are bound up with the interests of their class. They will see that it is folly for them to support in luxury a class of do-nothing owners. They will unite to overthrow the capitalistic system under which we are living, and to establish the Cooperative Commonwealth.

By this we mean a society in which the good things of life shall not be produced for the profit of a part of the people, but for the use of all the people, and where on one who is able to work shall have the privilege of living on the labor of others. We mean a society in which there shall not be a class of rulers with a class of workers under them, but in which all shall work and all shall rule — in which human equality shall be not a phrase but a fact.

Why do we expect this? There have been revolutions and revolutions, and when the smoke cleared away from the ruins of the old social structure, we have seen a new ruling class in power.

The sentimental Utopian says that people will come to realize how beautiful and heavenly it would be to live together in love, and that therefore he hopes to see the capitalists resign their unjust privileges and help establish a new republic based on human brotherhood. But that is not the answer of the Socialist.

The Socialist sees that the war between rulers and workers has lasted for ages, but that it is now assuming a clearer and more definite shape than ever before — that is in the United States and the other most highly "civilized" countries. In France a century ago the situation was much like that in Russia today. The king and the landholding nobles were dislodged from power, not by the working class but by an alliance of the workers with the capitalists, who were then just beginning to be an important factor in the life of the nation. The capitalists had interests of their own to serve which were distinct from and opposed to the interests of their allies, the workers. They came to the front, secured control of the government, and have used it in their own interest ever since.

But in the revolution that is coming, the case will be different. The victorious working class will be made up of people with one common interest — to get the wealth they produce and use it in living a happier life. They will have no subject class under them

that they could govern if they chose. All they need to do is to abolish the capitalist class as a class and treat the capitalists like anyone else. They will thus establish equality, not because it is so beautiful in theory, but because it is the only practical way of doing the work they want done.

When I say equality, I do not mean that all the money or all the wealth of the country will be “divided up.” That is something never advocated by a Socialist. It is one of the ridiculous lies told by our opponents to scare the laborer who has \$98 in the savings bank or who has a \$1,200 cottage with a \$900 mortgage on it.

No, we don’t need the money nor the houses nor the automobiles that the capitalists, or those who imagine themselves capitalists, have today. We want the use of the earth and of the machinery, and our labor will every year produce all the good things we need.

Again, it is no part of the Socialist program to make wages exactly equal for all kinds of labor. When the Socialist Party comes into power it will find industry being carried on and wages being paid. It will find some workers being paid good wages and others very low wages. It will find many unable to get work. It will find many children at work who ought to be in school. It will find that a large proportion of the earnings of those who work have been used to pay incomes to idlers.

Now, I do not know, nor does anyone know, just what will be the first act of a Socialist administration, but assuming that it comes into power with the general industrial conditions as I have described them, I think it pretty safe to make a few predictions as to what it would do.

It would stop paying rent, interest, and dividends to capitalists.

It would take the children out of the factories and send them to school, and would at least double the force of teachers within a short time.

It would at once give the least-skilled laborers enough of the comforts of life in return for their labor to let them live like human beings.

It would at once reduce the hours of labor to not more than eight, to be followed by the further reductions as soon as a plentiful supply of the necessities and comforts of life have been accumulated.

It would, no matter whether “money” were continued or abolished, sell the products of labor back to the laborers at actual cost, allowing for a percentage to pay for public services, furnished free, which would take the place of our present taxes.

When the Cooperative Commonwealth is in operation the rewards of the various kinds of labor will tend to adjust themselves automatically. If it is hard to find street-cleaners and easy to find bookkeepers when collectivism begins, it will be a simple matter to increase the rewards and reduce the hours of street-cleaners until a balance is reached.

It is very certain that a Socialist administration would not control all industry from one central point. The Socialist Party always and everywhere leaves the control in the hands of the smallest groups that can manage things efficiently. Again, it would not take away the artist’s brushes, nor the farmer’s little farm. We hold that tools so complex that they have to be used in common should be owned in common, but if a man choose to work with his own tools, there would be nothing in the world to prevent him from doing so, except the probable fact that as machinery improves it will be possible to earn more by working cooperatively than by working alone.

Finally, Socialists do not want to set up a government to control people’s actions. They believe that when everyone has an equal chance to earn a living, there will be little temptation to steal. We may have to keep a few policemen a few years, but their work will be mostly in taking care of those whose lives have already been wrecked by capitalism. When alcoholic drinks are no longer sold for profit, when cheating is no longer the road to social prominence, when every woman can be sure of a living without selling herself — then we may safely leave all questions of morals to the individual, while society attends to the production of the things the people need.

That is what the Socialists think. They do not want to do away with the freedom of the individual. On the contrary, they realize that today it is only a few here and there who have nay freedom worth speaking of. What they mean to do is make individual freedom a real thing for all.

There is no Socialist Utopia. In other words, there is no picture of the future collectivist society on which all Socialists agree. And because of this, some

impatient, capitalist-minded reformers complain that there are as many kinds of Socialism as there are Socialists. But they are wrong. All who know anything of International Socialism realize that ideas and institutions are not eternal and do not fall from heaven; neither do they take shape because a few individuals wish them to take shape in a particular way. New ideas and institutions are the outgrowth of industrial and economic changes, and since we can not tell what industrial and economic changes the next few years may bring, we can not tell how the laborers, when once victorious over the capitalists, will modify their ideas or adjust their institutions.

Consequently, all our predictions are cautious. Bellamy was a writer of fine imagination, but was not a Socialist; indeed, when he wrote his earlier work he knew nothing of Socialism. There are at present two books by European writers of unquestioned standing in the Socialist movement which answer in some detail the question constantly asked as to how things would be adjusted under the Cooperative Commonwealth. These are *Collectivism and Industrial Evolution*, by Emile Vandervelde of Belgium, and *The Social Revolution*, by Karl Kautsky of Germany. Many interesting details are also given in the two books by Charles H. Vail, entitled *Modern Socialism* and *Principles of Scientific Socialism*.

#### V.— The Socialist Party of America.

Let us review very briefly the conclusions that we have reached. First, we saw that men's ideas and institutions are the necessary outcome of the conditions under which they get their bread. Second, we saw that the working class in America today get their bread by creating "surplus value" for the owning class, who in turn get their bread and a good deal beside by taking what the workers earn. Third, we saw that this state of things has developed a "class struggle" between those who live by working and those who live by owning. Fourth, we saw that this class struggle must finally end in the downfall of the capitalist system, and the upbuilding of the Cooperative Commonwealth.

We come now to the means by which the Cooperative Commonwealth is to be brought about. Is it to be by reform or revolution?

First let us define these terms, for they are often

misunderstood. Reforms are not always peaceful; they are sometimes bloody. Many heads were broken in the Chartist riots in England before the corn laws were repealed and the first steps taken toward a system of factory legislation. And revolutions are sometimes peaceful, as when James II fled to France in 1688, and left the English capitalists in full control of the government, which they have held ever since.

The difference between reform and revolution is this: A reform is a change in the laws or the way of enforcing the laws, brought about by the same class that has all the time been in control. A revolution is a change in the laws or their enforcement brought about by a new ruling class, which overthrows the class that has thus far ruled, and takes its place in the control of the government.

The SOCIALIST PARTY OF AMERICA stands not for reform but for revolution, because it holds that the rule of the capitalist class, under which the workers of America now suffer, must be brought to an end, and that the workers must become the rulers.

This is the position not only of the Socialist Party of America but of the International Socialists of the World, represented by a large and growing party in every civilized country.

As to the means by which the capitalist class is to be overthrown, the real question worth considering is what means will prove most effective.

If it could best be done by working for "one thing at a time," and bidding for the votes of people who have no idea what the class struggle means, we should no doubt favor that method. But history has made it very clear that such a method is a dead failure. Look at Populism; look at Bryanism; look at the sad failure of the Dunne administration in Chicago.

If, on the other hand, the working class could best gain power by taking up arms, just as the capitalist class did when it dislodged the landholding nobility from power, why not? But as a matter of fact, machinery has been applied to fighting as well as to the production of goods, and the capitalist today control the machine guns that could in a few hours laughter the revolutionary workers of any of our cities.

Here in America there is a simple way to get hold of these guns as well as the rest of the machinery of government. It is by voting for the party of the working class, that is, the Socialist Party. Elect Socialist leg-

islators, and the laws will be made in the interest of the laborers. Elect Socialist judges and the injunctions will be issued to help the workers instead of the employers. Elect Socialist Mayors, Governors, and Presidents, and the policemen and soldiers will be at the disposal of the new ruling class, the working class, while the capitalist will cease to exist as a capitalist, and will go to work so that he can go on eating.

In saying this I do not mean to say that the election of one Socialist officer or of a hundred Socialist officers will in itself bring any great measure of freedom and happiness to the working class. As long as the capitalists control any part of the machinery of government, they will use that part to nullify any measure that may be passed in the interest of the working class.

But the Socialist Party does not on that account propose to stop fighting for the control of the government, nor does it propose to lay down any weapon that may be of use in the class struggle. It is in hearty sympathy with the trade unions, and will use all its strength to help them, just as a capitalist government uses all its strength to crush them. It stands for the prohibition of child labor, for shorter hours and higher wages, for old age pensions and for the public ownership of railways and streetcars under working class control, for the initiative and referendum and the right to remove officers by popular vote, for the equal suffrage of men and women, and for every other measure that may be for the immediate interests of the workers.

Yet the men and women who are working through the Socialist Party understand that if all the "reforms" that are being agitated were to be conceded by the capitalists, there would be no real gain of any great importance for the working class. Their constant aim therefore is to organize the workers into a party

which shall finally dislodge the capitalists from power once for all, and establish the Cooperative Commonwealth.

To be an active member of the Socialist Party something more is needed than to vote the ticket on election day. It is also necessary to join the party organization, pay the small monthly dues, and attend regular meetings.

Why is this? The Republicans and Democrats do not do that way.

No. Because the old parties are controlled by "bosses" who take their orders from the capitalists who pay the bills. If the laborers want to be their own bosses, they must pay their own bills, and that is why the monthly dues are required.

The frequent meetings are necessary in order that the affairs of the party may be controlled by the whole membership, and not by any little group of "leaders."

Besides, if the laborers are to know how to run the government when they carry the election, they need the experience to be had from running party affairs now. The organization of the Socialist Party may grown into the organization of the Cooperative Commonwealth, and it is worth the best efforts of every worker to make this organization as effective as possible.

If you who read this leaflet want to help in the work that the Socialist Party has to do, you should first join the nearest branch. If you do not know where to find it, and have no friends who are Socialists, write to J. Mahlon Barnes, National Secretary of the Socialist Party, 269 Dearborn Street, Chicago. He will send you the platform and constitution of the party on request. If there is a local in your county he will tell you where to find it. If there is none, he will put you in touch with the State Secretary, who will help you start a new local.

*Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.*

*Photo of Charles H. Kerr from Allen Ruff: "We Called Each Other Comrade": Charles H. Kerr & Compny, Radical Publishers. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997). Original in the Newberry Library, Chicago. Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2006. • Free reproduction permitted.*