
Signs of Social Revolution (September 2, 1899)

That the capitalist system is rushing to its doom is apparent to the most casual observer, and as this system declines, the new social order develops, and all the signs indicate a speedy and complete change.

It is impossible to contemplate the horrors of capitalism and remain neutral or passive unless, indeed, one be dead to every sentiment of humanity. When I think of the working class, their hovels, their rags and their crusts, and of the class out of work, patiently pleading for permission to do some menial service to enable them to relieve the hunger pangs of loved ones; when I think of the wretchedness of the coal miners and the millions of others who do the world's most useful work — the poverty of the toiler, the despair of his wife, the hopeless future of his children; the filth and groans and cursings, the lewdness and squalor, the prostitution and drunkenness, the suicide and murder, and the ten thousand other forms of evil that afflict society in the twilight of the Nineteenth century, I conclude that our vaunted civilization is a sham and that in spite of our mental achievements and material progress, the earth we live on is not yet a habitable globe.

But I would not have it understood that I am pessimistic, that I have lost faith in the ultimate triumph of humanity. Oh, no; I was never more cheerful and never more confident, for like millions of other socialists in all lands beneath the bending skies, I am reading the signs of social revolution, and, therefore, I know beyond all question that capitalism is wearing out, and that from the chaos with which its competitive conquests have filled the world, there is evolving a new social order, universal in scope and based upon cooperative industry of every field of human activity.

Can the day of change be hastened? Without a doubt. Every socialist who spreads the light according to his opportunity, who helps the propaganda, votes the socialist ticket, and encourages others to do likewise is doing his share to speed the day of the new commonwealth.

The Social Democratic Party now extends across the continent and new branches are being instituted with gratifying rapidity. In 1900 a Presidential ticket will be placed in the field upon an uncompromising socialist

platform, and we confidently expect to poll a vote that will surprise the country.

Permit me to assure the comrades of Ruskin Commonwealth of my best wishes in their new field of operation.¹ I have always had a keen interest in Ruskin and have followed the comrades in their trials and privations with deep sympathy, hoping that at last they might overcome every obstacle and realize their laudable ambitions.

I have not forgotten, nor shall I forget, how kind and helpful our Ruskin comrades were to my colleagues and myself and how loyally The Coming Nation supported us in the dark days of '94, and so I say: All luck to Ruskin Commonwealth.

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¹ The Ruskin Commonwealth Association was a utopian socialist colony established near Tennessee City, Tennessee in 1894. The group's financial angel was land developer-turned-socialist evangelist J.A. Wayland (1854-1912), who gifted his socialist weekly, *The Coming Nation*, to the new cooperative enterprise. Wayland soon became disgruntled with rural pioneering and departed the colony in 1895, moving to Kansas City to launch a new weekly newspaper, *Appeal to Reason*. Internal dissension was rife and the colony's primitive industry unsuccessful; after a move to Georgia the group disbanded in the fall of 1901.