

## Political Evolution and the Socialist Mission (January 14, 1905)

Political parties, like all other human institutions, are subject to the laws of evolution. The Republican Party of Theodore Roosevelt is vastly different from the Republican Party of Abraham Lincoln. The Democratic Party retains only the name given it by its founders. Once divided upon vital issues, these two parties are now so nearly akin to each other that the great trusts in control of the government are supremely indifferent as to whether the one or the other succeeds to power. In the next few years they will become one, or, at least, the dominant elements of both will unite in the same party. The evolution of capital and labor will make this inevitable.

Political parties express the material interests of those who compose them. Great economic issues divide the people politically and determine their party alignment. In the development of the present capitalist system society has been mainly divided into capitalists and wage-workers. Between these two economic classes there is a war. This conflict is the vital and paramount political issue of the day and upon this issue the people who have the intelligence to understand it are dividing according to their material interests.

The late Senator Hanna<sup>1</sup> had the political foresight to discern the approaching party alignment on the basis of Labor vs. Capital and warned the Republican Party that its next great struggle would be with socialism.

The Socialist Party is the child of the class struggle. It was born of the necessity of the working class and is the party of that class as against the capitalist class.

The labor question is essentially a political question.

The capitalist class rule because they have control of government. The working class are preparing to profit by their example. Numerically they are overwhelmingly in the majority. They have simply to unite and act together politically as a class to put themselves in control of government and emancipate themselves from wage-slavery.

At the last election this working class party asserted its national power. Henceforward the working class are a distinct factor of increasing influence and portentous meaning in the politics of the nation.

Superficial observers express their surprise and conclude that it is but a flash on the political horizon and that the Socialist Party will soon go the way of all "reform" parties. Their delusion will soon be dispelled. As the contest proceeds they will note that the Socialist Party is a party of revolution, not of reform; that it stands for the revolutionary idea of collective ownership of the means of wealth production and the overthrow of the wage system and that no reform of the present order of society, however radical or sweeping it may be claimed to be, will satisfy its class-conscious supporters now counted by hundreds of thousands and soon to be numbered by millions.

Moreover, the Socialist Party is founded in the bedrock principles of scientific socialism. It understands the process of social evolution and philosophically prosecutes its propaganda and bides its time. It deludes itself with no promise of premature victory. It has no itching for office. Spoils have no temptation for it. This revolutionary party has but one mission and that is the political unity of the working class to wrest the government from the capitalistic class as the necessary means of abolishing the capitalist system and achieving industrial freedom and social justice.

This party knows no such word as fusion. The merest hint of compromise is rejected with scorn and indignation. No concessions that any capitalist party might offer would turn the Socialist Party the breadth of a hair from the clear-cut course through which it is hewing its way to ultimate victory.

The Social Democracy is composed of working men and women who have come into consciousness of their class interests. It is a party of thinkers and the only party in which rank and file are supreme. This party has no use for a political Moses and can never be misled or sold out by ignorant or corrupt leaders.

The shibboleth of the movement is: "Workingmen of all countries unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to gain." Since these great words flashed from the lips of Karl Marx half a century ago they have been caught up by the words of one nation after another, until the international socialist movement now girdles the globe and more than 8 million wage earners are keeping step to the pulse beats of their coming emancipation, which they know full well can be achieved only by themselves.

The present economic conditions are a denial of peace and order and if they had tongues would cry out in protest and hail the impending change.

The extremest wealth and most abject poverty run riot side by side. Periodical industrial depression turns thousands of workers into loafers, vagabonds, tramps, outcasts, and criminals. Everything is done for profit. The very machine that labor invents to lighten its burden becomes in this system he means of throwing it into the street as a useless commodity, to find its way at last into the gulf of hell.

Private ownership of he means of life has educed millions to hopeless poverty, ignorance, vice, and crime.

In the light of Colorado,<sup>2</sup> Fall River,<sup>3</sup> and the Packingtown<sup>4</sup> hells what supreme hardihood to charge socialism with breaking up the home, disrupting the family, polluting the marriage relation, and destroying the religious life of the people! These things are being done at an appalling rate every hour in the day in the very system these false accusers are supporting and of which they are the pliant tools or the miserable mercenaries.

What is it that socialism proposes? Simply that the tools workingmen made and use and upon which their very lives depend shall be owned by themselves that they may fully produce the things that are required to keep themselves and their families in comfort and health. This is what socialism means, and when it comes to pass all the world will be the better for it.

Frances Willard,<sup>5</sup> great soul that she was, understood it all clearly when she declared that socialism and only socialism would put an end to intemperance and poverty. The trend of the evolution is toward socialism. The economic basis of society is shaping for the change. A new social order is dawning. The centralization of capital and the organization of labor are paving the way to the socialist republic. Capitalism and competition have had their day. Socialism and cooperation are next in order. This will mean society free from class rule and all the world at peace.

Very simple is the program of the Socialist Party: the organization of the working class for political conquest. When the working class succeeds to power the rest will follow as a matter of course. The capital of the country will have been completely centralized, the middle class decimated, and competition practically eliminated, and at this point the people will be ready for the transfer of the means of production from private hands to the people in their collective capacity.

*The sooner the trusts dispossess the people the sooner will the people dispossess the trusts.*

Then exploitation of class by class will cease — rent, interest, and profit will be no more. Wealth will be produced by social labor in such

abundance as to satisfy all human wants. Then leisure, light, virtue, and joy instead of idleness, darkness, misery, and death.

A new era will dawn in the destiny of the race. In the words of Engels, “mankind will rise from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom.”<sup>6</sup>

Obstacles there will be, and many of them, but however formidable they may be they will have to yield to the international revolutionary movement of the working class to abolish the last form of industrial servitude and dedicate the world to freedom and joy.

Originally written for the Hearst newspaper chain, which apparently did not run the piece. Published as “The Mission of Socialism” in *Social Democratic Herald*, vol. 7, no. 37, whole no. 337 (Jan. 14, 1905), p. 1.

---

<sup>1</sup> Marcus A. “Mark” Hanna (1837-1904) was a conservative political operative who was elected to the first of two terms in US senator from Ohio in 1896, a position which he held until his death, Hanna was the first president of the National Civic Federation, established in 1900.

<sup>2</sup> Several hard rock mining towns in Colorado were the scene of bitter strikes and brutal repression during the first years of the twentieth century.

<sup>3</sup> Fall River, Massachusetts was the site of a July 1904 strike of textile workers.

<sup>4</sup> Packingtown is the name of the Chicago meat-packing district, location of a great strike in 1904.

<sup>5</sup> Frances Willard (1839-1898) was the college educated co-founder of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the leading prohibition organization in the United States. She served as president of that organization from 1879 until the time of her death. Willard turned to Christian socialism during the last decade of her life.

<sup>6</sup> Allusion to Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring* [1878] in *Marx-Engels Collected Works: Volume 25*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987; p. 270.