

The case for free love: some capitalist hypocrisies exposed

To the Revolutionist it is almost an axiom that modern society is rotten—rotten to the root! The production of wealth—the first essential form of human activity—is carried on, not for the purpose of satisfying the physical needs of the workers, but with the motive of accumulating wealth in the shape of capital. The means of production are exalted above the producer. These supplementary organs of society are owned and controlled by a small percentage of the race, and the rest of mankind exist merely to augment them for the benefit of the few. Every human faculty capable of serving the interests of these exploiters has to be surrendered by those who possess nought else in return for the wherewithal to purchase the bare means of subsistence. It thus becomes perverted and deteriorates as a consequence. Cash dominates all social relationships and vitiates them.

Sexual relations form no exception to the general rule. The natural purpose for which men and women should mate is the perpetuation of the race and the incidental satisfaction of the sexual instinct. This motive, however, has about the least weight of any in determining the conditions of sexual intercourse at the present day.

The great majority of women, as of men, are dependent on the capitalist class for bread, and being by nature inferior to men as wealth producers, are compelled to turn their sexual attractions to account in order to balance the handicap which sex itself imposes upon them in the competition for employment. Just as the poet, the artist, the physician and the lawyer, to say nothing of the parson and the politician, regard their special abilities as the means of "making a career", so women generally look upon their natural endowment as an economic asset. On the other hand men have come to regard women as existing mainly, if not wholly, for the satisfaction of their own sexual desires, which tend to degenerate as a natural result into lust unredeemed by any regard for the will or the affection of women.

In ordinary public prostitution the divorce of the sex relation from its true motive is too obvious to need no special comment. Marriage, however, is in reality similar in nature. Stripped of all the sentiment with which an essentially false conventionalism has surrounded it, the legal contract, like all others, consists of an exchange of commodities. In return for the guarantee of economic maintenance the woman surrenders her body to the man, who thereby acquires the "marital right" to force maternity upon her whenever he chooses, irrespective of her own desires.

It is true that wives are also useful as household drudges, but considering only the sexual aspect of the relationship, the only difference between marriage and so-called immorality for cash is that the former is purchase, with the terms legally recognised and enforceable while the latter is hire. The monetary damages awarded in breach of promise and divorce cases serve to illustrate this. The loss of prospective maintenance by the woman, or the loss of the conjugal monopoly by the man, as the case may be, is estimated at so much in cash. Need more be said to show that the sex-nature in woman has been reduced by capitalism to the level of a commodity?

Children may be said to be the incidental bye-products of marriage rather than its fundamental object. They also become the property of the husband who, like any other slave-owner, is responsible for their maintenance.

The advantages of this arrangement to the parent, however, depends upon his own economic status. The capitalist can exploit the "expectations" of his heirs by making their inheritance depend upon the subservience of their activities to his commercial interests. It is considered a matter of honour for both sons and daughters to make matches with a view to enhancing the stability of the family fortunes.

On the other hand, the working man with a precarious income is compelled to drive his "brats" to the factory, the workshop, or the office in order to enable him to barely fulfil his legal responsibilities toward them. Indeed, large numbers are compelled to rely on similar aid from their wives. Even these measures tend to cut the ground from under the feet of the working men themselves, for the entrance of women and children into the labour market necessarily results in keener competition for jobs hitherto performed by men, with a resulting lowering of the rate of wages and an increased inability to maintain a family on their part.

Verily, modern machinery under capitalism is the sword promised by the Prince of Peace to set parents against children and *vice-versa*, and to make a man's foes "those of his own household".

Marriage and family, for the working class, are to the extent that they survive, mere legal devices to prevent encroachment upon the pockets of the ratepayers. For society as a whole they are the means of maintaining and augmenting private property. We come back, then, to our starting point, that human relations are dominated by this necessity. Let us consider its effect on the quality of sex.

In all phases of the competitive supply of human requirements, their quality is determined by the power of the purse. The economic resources of the great mass of the people consist of subsistence wages. Consequently cheapness is the first consideration, and quality naturally deteriorates. Sex is affected in the same manner as all other commodities. Supply tending to exceed demand in this as in all other markets, all manner of tricks to ensure a ready sale are resorted to. Sham attractions are set in competition with real ones. The adulteration of food stuffs, clothing, etc., in such a manner as to tickle the palate and catch the eye, is here paralleled by the substitution of paint on the cheeks for the glow of health, and the use of perfumes for preventing the detection of the symptoms of indigestion. Constricted waists and artificially exaggerated figures seek to excite male passions, while in order that these same passions may be cheaply indulged, various methods for the prevention of conception are commonly resorted to. Finally, the excessive and promiscuous intercourse, which the legal contract can neither prevent nor completely hide, gives rise to various diseases, which form a source of profit for innumerable purveyors of patent medicines, appliances, and systems, which, like most palliatives (political ones included), make bad worse.

The fancied security offered by marriage from the necessity of entering the labour market or adopting life on the streets leads women to give little consideration to the physical fitness of the first male person who is in a position to offer marriage and does so. Consequently matrimonial misfits, temperamental and physiological, tend to become the rule rather than the exception, and it is not to be wondered at that the children of such unions are degenerate. Add to this the myriad forms of "literary",

"artistic", and "theatrical" enterprise devoted to the stimulation and exploitation of vicious imaginations, and the "problems" arising from the possession of the same, and it becomes questionable whether the limit has not been reached in the commercialisation and degradation of sex.

Above this welter of misery the employers of cheap feminine labour, the financiers of the white slave traffic and all the gold barons who directly or indirectly levy toll on the vice and its effects, idle away useless, harmful, albeit "philanthropic" lives amid the luxury heaped up by their degenerate slaves; while, hanging on to their purse strings with the tenacity of limits, the parsons and moralists, "physicians" and "reformers" of every description, pretend to be clearing up the mess—incidentally appearing to enjoy the job the more the longer it lasts and increases in extent—and in the market squares and recreation grounds crowds of debilitated and anaemic wage-slaves listen with bated breath and simulate the pious shudders of the "intellectual" gents of the Anti-Socialist Union as they describe the orgy of bestiality they assure their audiences will be inaugurated by the advent of Socialism. "Community of Women!! Universal Prostitution and Promiscuity!!" they cry, endeavouring to frighten their hearers with the shadow in order to divert their attention from the reality, and the economic system on which it is based and which these same paid hacks are out to defend.

Years ago Marx and Engels (unlike the Fabian Society, the ILP, and all the other pseudo-Socialist crowd who allow this misrepresentation of free love), challenged these gentry with the facts in terms that are worth quoting. In the *Communist Manifesto*, section II, dealing with numerous objections to Communism, they say:

The bourgeois (capitalist) sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the means of production are to become common property, and naturally can only think that the lot of becoming common property will likewise fall to women.

He never suspects that the real point aimed at is to do away with three position of women as mere instruments of production.

For the rest, nothing is more ridiculous than the virtuous horror of our bourgeois at the community of women which he pretends will be officially established by the Communists.

The members of our bourgeoisie, not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take special delight in mutually seducing each other's wives.

Bourgeois marriage is in reality community of wives. The Communists could at most be accused of wishing to replace a hypocritically concealed community of women by an official and open community of women. For the rest, it is evident that with the abolition of the present system of production will disappear also the community of women resulting from it, i. e., public prostitution.

And so it is.

The degradation of women as a sex is but a special aspect of the general degradation of humanity. The cause of this degradation is, as we have shown, the private ownership of society's means of subsistence. To remove the cause is the task of the great mass of society—the working class. Only by converting the instruments of production into common property can they emancipate themselves from the necessity of prostituting their faculties to the foul service of the capitalist class, which, like an octopus, sucks the blood of every part of the social body.

With this freedom established, all human activities will depend upon their desirability and usefulness to those who perform them. Consequently our faculties will be devoted, unhampered by economic considerations, to their true purpose. When women have free access, as members of the community, to a sufficiency of those things necessary to a healthy and happy life, their genuine sex-nature will assert itself. When children are born with a similar birthright, the need for avoiding them or exploiting them for private ends will disappear also. They will be born and reared for their own sake, as they should be. Therefore between man and woman, parents and children, affection will be the only tie. Modern marriage and the present so-called family life, like all other legal institutions, with their sordid monetary and proprietary bases, will be relegated to the limbo of the forgotten past. Where love exists chains are unnecessary; where it does not they are undesirable to those who would be free. But to expect sexual love, parental love, or fraternal love to flourish under a social order based on competition, greed, and hatred is akin to looking for figs on thistles.

To sweep away the foul conditions of producing and distributing the material wants of mankind, which today render these latter qualities essential to existence, thus preventing the development of human love, we call our fellow-workers to arise.

There is a sordid system to be overthrown, a class battenning thereon to be fought. And as the power of this class, to which it ferociously clings, consists of the control of the political allegiance of the workers themselves, our course is obvious. We must organise as a class, wrest from our masters the forces of coercion directed by the machinery of government, and having thus removed the only obstacle, take possession of the indispensable resources of nature and of society—the land, the machines, and all those things necessary for the production and distribution of wealth. Such is the programme of the Socialist Party. We do not flinch from any of its implications.

"The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims . . . The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains: they have a world to win".

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