

The Socialist Party of Great Britain

The greatest problem awaiting solution in the world to-day is the existence in every commercial country of extreme poverty side by side with extreme wealth. In every land where, in the natural development of society, the capitalist method of producing and distributing wealth has been introduced, this problem presses itself upon us. Not only so but the greater the grip which capitalism has on industry the more intense is the poverty of the many and the more marked are the riches of the few.

In observing the conditions of this problem, the fact is quickly forced under our notice that it is the producer of wealth who is poor, the non-producer who is rich. How comes it that the men and women who till the soil, who dig the mine, who manipulate the machine, who build the factory and the home, and, in a word, who create the whole of the wealth, receive only sufficient to maintain themselves and their families on the border line of bare physical efficiency, while those who do not aid in production – the employing class – obtain more than is enough to supply their every necessity, comfort, and luxury?

To find a solution to this problem is the task to which the Socialist applies himself. He sees clearly that only by studying the economics of wealth-production and distribution can he understand the anomalies of present-day society. He sees, further, that having gained a knowledge of the economic causes of social inequality, he must apply this knowledge through political action – through the building up of a Socialist organisation for the capture of Parliament and the conquest of the powers of government.

To every sober observer of social facts it is patent that the life condition of the workers is one of penury and of misery. The only saleable commodity they possess – their power of working – they are compelled to take to the labour market and sell for a bare subsistence wage. The food they eat, the clothing they wear, the houses in which they live are of the shoddiest kind, and these together with the mockery of an education which their children receive, primarily determine the purchasing price of their labour-power. By organising in their various trades they may force their wage a little above this normal value, but taken on the average they are bound to sell their activity – physical, mental and moral – for the bare cost of their subsistence.

In return for this wage they create, by the conversion of raw material into manufactured products or by other means, a value far in excess of the value paid them as wages. The difference between these two values is taken by the employing class, and constitutes the source of profit, interest, and rent. These three forms of exploitation are the result of the unpaid labour of the working-class.

So long as this lasts – and it will last as long as the capitalist system of society – it will not be possible for the workers by any Trades Union organisation to more than slightly modify their condition, and their power in this direction is becoming every day more limited by the combinations among employers to defeat the aims of the working class.

Then, too, the magnitude of industrial operations, ever tending to increase by the inherent tendency under free competition of the large producer to crush out his smaller trade rivals – the joint stock company takes the place of the large individual, capitalist, the trust the place of the joint stock company. The worker is thus brought face to face with an ever greater foe.

The Socialist can calmly view this struggle, knowing that ultimately the victory is with him. In the meantime, however, he has to show the workers that while their organisation in trades will prove an invaluable aid in the transformation of society by facilitating industrial reorganisation, yet at present they can best help to emancipate themselves from the thralldom of wage-slavery by recognising that in their class struggle with their exploiters they can be most certain of success in the political sphere of action.

Such political action will, however, be quite futile unless carried on by a class-conscious party with definite aims. Such a party must recognise that in the class-war they are waging there must be no truce. They must adopt as their basis of action the Socialist position, for in no other way can their ills be redressed.

To neither of the two historic parties can we look with any hope. The Liberal Party, like the Conservative Party, is interested in maintaining the present class society, and cannot, therefore, be expected to help in its transformation from capitalism to Socialism.

The National Democratic League and the Labour Representation Committee are also to be avoided. The former has a programme of purely political measures, each of which is found in the constitutions of France and the United States of America without the working-class being in any way benefited. The latter organisation has no programme whatsoever, and its members possess no principles in common save the name "Labour." As soon as any question of constructive legislation is brought before it its component elements will break part, being unable to agree among themselves. Unity is only possible among those who possess common principles. Unity can not, therefore, be secured for any length of time by the members of the Labour Representation Committee, but even if it could, the body is not based upon Socialist principles and should not receive the adhesion of working men.

We, as Socialists, venture to assert that the party which is ultimately to secure the support of the rank and file of the working-class must be a Socialist party. Such a party must be ever prepared to further the realisation of a Socialist Society. It must proclaim the fact that this realisation can be achieved by the members of the working-class using their political power to return to Parliament and other public bodies only those who are members of The Socialist Party.

In the past two bodies of men have put forward the claim to be Socialist parties, *viz.*, the Independent Labour Party and Social Democratic Federation. We who have for many years taken a share in the work of the latter organisation and who have watched the progress of the former from its initiation, have been forced to the conclusion that through neither of them can the Social Revolution at which we aim be achieved, and that from neither of them can the working-class secure redress from the ills they suffer.

The Independent Labour Party, founded for the ostensible reason of forming a half-way house to Socialism, was fated to meet with the reward of every party founded upon a compromise. With a membership of those who were sympathetic with Socialism, but who were not Socialists, they were bound to drift nearer and nearer to the Liberal Party. Having neither the courage to proclaim themselves Socialists nor to disavow Socialism, they are to-day coquetting with that working-class wing of the Liberal Party – the Labour Representation Committee. When the question of Socialism was raised on the committee, their chief representative declared that was neither the time nor the place for such discussion. With a party of this kind, which, in the words of their president, "is independent to support, independent to oppose" the two historic political parties, the working-class should have nothing to do.

The Social Democratic Federation formed to further the cause of Socialism in Great Britain, has, during the last few years, been steadily following the compromising policy adopted from the first by the Independent Labour Party. So much is this the case that to-day, for all purposes of effective Socialist propaganda they have ceased to exist, and are surely developing into a mere reform party, seeking to obtain the provision of Free Maintenance for school children.

Those Socialists who, within its ranks, sought to withstand this policy, have found the task to be an impossible one, and have consequently seceded and formed themselves into the Socialist Party of Great Britain – a party determined to use its every effort in the furtherance of Socialist ideas and Socialist principles.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain is convinced that by laying down a clearly defined body of principles in accord with essential economic truths, and by consistently advocating them, swerving neither to the right nor to the left, but marching uncompromisingly on toward their goal, they will ultimately gain the confidence and the support of the working-class of this country. once this is secured it is a small step to the organisation of a Socialist Parliamentary party. When this is accomplished all is gained.

The first duty of The Socialist Party is the teaching of its principles and the organisation of a political party on a Socialist basis. The party becoming strong will capture parliamentary and other governmental powers. When these powers – legislative, administrative, and judicial, are wrested from their present class holders,

they way is clear for the building up of the industries of the country upon the principle of collective production and collective distribution, and for the establishment of the Socialist Republic.

Men and women of the working-class, it is to you we appeal! To-day we are a small party, strong only in the truth of our principles, the sincerity of our motives, and the determination and enthusiasm of our members. To-morrow we shall be strong in our numbers, for the economic development of capitalist society fights for us, and as, through the merging of free competition in monopoly and the simplification of industry, the personal capitalist gives place to the impersonal trust as your employer, you will be forced to see that the welfare of the people can best be guaranteed by the holding of all material wealth in common.

We ask you, therefore, to study the principles upon which our party is based, to find out for yourselves what Socialism is and how Socialism alone can abolish class society and establish in its stead a society based upon social equality. When you have done this we know that you will come with us and, by enrolling yourself a member of The Socialist Party of Great Britain, help to speed the time when we shall herald in for ourselves and for our children, a brighter, a happier and a nobler society than any the world has yet witnessed.

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