

## Is socialism international?

It is interesting, and also somewhat amusing, to occasionally take note of the more prevalent objections to Socialism, and to compare present-day objections with those that did duty, in lieu of argument, but a short time ago. From such a survey one can see that there has been quite an evolution of ideas in anti-Socialist circles.

Commencing with the cries of “sharing out” and “equal division”, we pass *en route* many other equally brilliant and smashing points against Socialism. But Socialism, with that cruel perversity which seems inherent within it, refused to be smashed, and has continued to thrive and develop in spite of the procession of fallacious pleas with which it has been assailed. In consequence of this these weapons have fallen more or less into disuse, have been allowed to rust, as it were, in the anti-Socialist armoury. In fact, the Socialists seemed to take a delight in knocking to pieces the case of the most pain-staking opponent.

Beaten from pillar to post, the gentlemen whose interest lies in obscuring the issue sought refuge for awhile in what they termed the frailty of human nature. Socialism, which before was so bad, now became too pure, too noble, for sinful man. Human nature was an indefinable something possessed by everybody, and all the agencies from the Church upward which have for their object the changing of human nature were in consequence on the wrong track. But the facts of the situation were once more against them; the changes which have taken place in mankind’s nature, corresponding with the changes in Society’s manner of getting a living, prove this view as untenable as it is absurd.

And now a strange thing happened. Driven desperate by their failure to arrest the progress of the Socialist idea, our opponents affirmed what previously they had shunned like a plague—the international character of Socialism. We are now informed, with scornful lip and an air of triumphant originality, that Socialism is international and is therefore impossible of realisation.

I want, first of all, to congratulate the anti-Socialists upon the correctness of their premise. Socialism *is* international. For years we have affirmed it, argued it against the very people who now put it forward as a proof of its impracticability. We claim above everything else that Socialism is scientific. It is no mere Utopian dream, but is the direct and inevitable outcome of the present conditions of life and labour, as, indeed, every social system is the outcome of the one that preceded it. In the middle ages the handicraftsman and the small peasant proprietor, with the simple, individual tools and implements of production, used to produce wealth and individually own and enjoy what their energy had called into being. In such circumstances the scientific Socialist conception of society could not arise. But with the development of industry and the introduction of machinery, an industrial revolution took place, with the result that production to-day is no longer individual, but is collective or social.

This state of affairs is not confined to England—for social systems are not, and cannot be, kept within national boundaries—but is widespread over the globe. While, however, the method of producing wealth all over the civilised world, has undergone a change from individual to social production, yet we find the ownership of the wealth when produced still remains individual. This contradiction, this grotesque social

absurdity, lies at the root of all the trouble in modern society. It gives rise to the class antagonism which obtains to-day, and which the Socialist alone can trace unerringly to this division of interest between the class who possess and the class who produce.

In every country under the domination of capital the simple facts of the situation are driving the workers to see the cause of the trouble, and are forcing them to an understanding of the remedy. Wherever capitalism is, Socialism accompanies it like a shadow. When Japan leapt into the front rank of capitalism ideas of Socialism began to spread in that country—to the dismay of the ruling class, who in vain attempted to suppress them.

In glancing through history we can see that even in the capitalist uprising against feudalism there were independent outbursts of the fore-runners of the modern working class, then in process of development. We had, for instance at the German Reformation and the Peasant's War, the Anabaptists and Thomas Münzer; in the great English Cromwellian revolt, the Levellers; in the French Revolution, Babeuf and his followers—all of which shows how the various countries develop along similar lines and how industrial conditions fashion the thoughts of men and drive their energies into the same channels irrespective of difference of nationality.

If this was the case in earlier times how much more will it hold under our present commercial system. We have an example to-day in the struggle which is going on in India, Egypt, Turkey, Persia, etc for constitutional Government such as industrial conditions have rendered necessary elsewhere. Every day capitalism is becoming more interlaced and interwoven. Ancient trade restrictions, national barriers and frontiers all go down before the steady march of the cosmopolitan profit mongers. Financial crises, like that experienced in America recently, have far-reaching and disastrous effects upon the markets of the world, just as the disorder of one human organ effects the whole body.

The idea, then, of chopping off bits of society and establishing Socialism in this hole and corner fashion is one which will not bear investigation. Either capitalism will survive and the ill-fated and premature attempt at working class supremacy will be crushed—like the Paris Commune—or the working class will be the victors, the Social Revolution will be accomplished, and capitalism will disappear.

Each country, too, is now engaged in the scramble for foreign markets, so that the tendency is for the mental and physical standard of the world's workers to arrive at a common level, viz, that which enables them to produce as efficiently and as cheaply as possible, in an endeavour to undersell their competitors in the world market. Just as in each country competition among the masters forces the workers of that country down to a "dull and dead level", so competition among nations has the same result internationally. This means that with the conditions of life and the education of the world's workers being almost identical and becoming ever more so, their capacity for understanding Socialism and their progress towards it will be at about the same rate in every country under the highly centralised thralldom of capital. This furnishes a complete answer to those who prophesy that one country will be ready for the change before the others. To-day in all countries the workers are beginning to cast off the ancient and worm-eaten ideas of social reform, and are delving deep into the mechanism of capitalism, and in consequence are grasping the essentials of Socialism,

of which, once they have secured a firm grip, they will never let go.

While we can admit that just as, to-day, there are places on the fringe of civilisation which capitalism has not defiled, and where remnants of past societies still linger, so under Socialism these remote places may still pursue their time-honoured customs; yet we know that capitalist society is doomed, that the whole of its rotten social fabric will go down before the inexorable march of progress. The future lies with us, the past belongs to our enemies. They depend for their success upon the ever-diminishing working-class ignorance; we depend for ours upon the increasing working-class knowledge.

Based as our beliefs are, upon knowledge and investigation, we can afford to smile at those who wish to substitute for Socialism—international and revolutionary—that takes its stand upon the class war, a special brand suited to insular tastes and prejudices, and warranted of English manufacture. Alluring as the electoral successes won by this kind of trickery may appear, they offer nothing substantial to the workers—they merely spell wasted energy and time lost to those who are beguiled by them.

We are not out to build up fantastic theories but to correctly interpret the trend of industrial development and to embody the essence of that research in our principles—which govern our actions—to the end that the working class of this country shall be ready to take their part in freeing society once and for all of class domination.

R. Fox

(August 1910)