

# *Reform or Revolution*

*By DANIEL DE LEON*



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# REFORM OR REVOLUTION

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Mr. Chairman and Workingmen of Boston: I have got into the habit of putting two and two together, and drawing my conclusions. When I was invited to come to Boston, the invitation reached me at about the same time with an official information that a reorganization of the party was contemplated in the city of Boston. I put the two together and I drew the conclusion that part of the purpose of the invitation was for me to come here to tell you upon what lines we in New York organized, and upon what lines we “wicked” Socialists of New York and Brooklyn gave the capitalist class last November the 16,000-vote black eye.

## ‘ORGANIZATION’

It has become an axiom that, to accomplish results, organization is requisite. Nevertheless, there is “organization” and “organization.” That this is so appears clearly from the fact that the pure and simplers have been going about saying to the workers: “Organize! Organize!” and after they have been saying that, and have been “organizing” and “organizing” for the past 30 or 40 years, we find that they are virtually where they started, if not worse off; that their “organization” partakes of the nature of the lizard, whose tail destroys what his foreparts build up.

I think the best thing I can do to aid you in organizing is to give you the principles upon which the Socialist sections of New York and Brooklyn are organized. To do that I shall go back to basic principles, and in explaining to you the difference there is between reform and revolution, I shall be able, step by step, to point out how it is we do it and how you ought to do.

I shall assume—it is a wise course for a speaker to adopt—that none in this audience knows what is “reform” and what is “revolution.” Those who are posted will understand me all the better; those who are not will follow me all the easier.

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We hear people talk about the “reform forces,” about “evolution” and about “revolution” in ways that are highly mixed. Let us clear up our terms. Reform means a change of externals; revolution—peaceful or bloody, the peacefulness or bloodiness of it cuts no figure whatever in the essence of the question—means a change from within.

### REFORM

Take, for instance, a poodle. You can reform him in a lot of ways. You can shave his whole body and leave a tassel at the tip of his tail; you may bore a hole through each ear, and tie a blue bow on one and a red bow on the other; you may put a brass collar around his neck with your initials on, and a trim little blanket on his back; yet, throughout, a poodle he was and a poodle he remains. Each of these changes probably wrought a corresponding change in the poodle’s life. When shorn of all his hair except a tassel at the tail’s tip he was owned by a wag who probably cared only for the fun he could get out of his pet; when he appears gaily decked in bows, probably his young mistress’ attachment is of tenderer sort; when later we see him in the fancier’s outfit, the treatment he receives and the uses he is put to may be yet again and probably are, different. Each of these transformations or stages may mark a veritable epoch in the poodle’s existence. And yet, essentially, a poodle he was, a poodle he is and a poodle he will remain. That is reform.

### REVOLUTION

But when we look back myriads of years, or project ourselves into far-future physical cataclysms, and trace the development of animal life from the invertebrate to the vertebrate, from the lizard to the bird, from the quadruped and mammal till we come to the prototype of the poodle, and finally reach the poodle himself, and so forward—then do we find radical changes at each step, changes from within that alter the very essence of his being, and that put, or will put, upon him each time a stamp that alters the very system of his existence. That is revolution.

So with society. Whenever a change leaves the internal mechanism untouched, we have reform; whenever the internal mechanism is changed, we have revolution.

Of course, no internal change is possible without external manifestations. The

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internal changes denoted by the revolution or evolution of the lizard into the eagle go accompanied with external marks. So with society. And therein lies one of the pitfalls into which dilettantism or “reforms” invariably tumble. They have noticed that externals change with internals; and they rest satisfied with mere external changes, without looking behind the curtain. But of this more presently.

We Socialists are not reformers; we are revolutionists. We Socialists do not propose to change forms. We care nothing for forms. We want a change of the inside of the mechanism of society, let the form take care of itself. We see in England a crowned monarch; we see in Germany a sceptered emperor; we see in this country an uncrowned president, and we fail to see the essential difference between Germany, England or America. That being the case, we are skeptics as to forms. We are like grown children, in the sense that we like to look at the inside of things and find out what is there.

One more preliminary explanation. Socialism is lauded by some as an angelic movement, by others it is decried as a devilish scheme. Hence you find the Gomperses blowing hot and cold on the subject; and Harry Lloyd, with whose capers, to your sorrow, you are more familiar than I, pronouncing himself a Socialist in one place, and in another running socialism down. Socialism is neither an aspiration of angels nor a plot of devils. Socialism moves with its feet firmly planted in the ground and its head not lost in the clouds; it takes science by the hand, asks her to lead and goes whithersoever she points. It does not take science by the hand, saying: “I shall follow you to the end of the road if it please me.” No! It takes her by the hand and says: “Whithersoever thou leadest, thither am I bound to go.” The Socialists, consequently, move as intelligent men; we do not mutiny because, instead of having wings, we have arms, and cannot fly as we would wish.

What then, with an eye single upon the differences between reform and revolution, does socialism mean? To point out that, I shall take up two or three of what I may style the principle nerve centers of the movement.

### GOVERNMENT—THE STATE

One of these principal nerve centers is the question of “government” or the question of the “state.” How many of you have not seen upon the shelves of our libraries books

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that treat upon the “History of the State”; upon the “Limitations of the State”; upon “What the State Should Do and What It Should Not Do”; upon the “Legitimate Functions of the State,” and so on into infinity? Nevertheless, there is not one among all of these, the products, as they all are, of the vulgar and superficial character of capitalist thought, that fathoms the question or actually defines the “state.” Not until we reach the great works of the American Morgan, of Marx and Engels, and of other Socialist philosophers, is the matter handled with that scientific lucidity that proceeds from facts, leads to sound conclusions and breaks the way to practical work. Not until you know and understand the history of the “state” and of “government” will you understand one of the cardinal principles upon which socialist organization rests, and will you be in a condition to organize successfully.

We are told that “government” has always been as it is today and will always be. This is the first fundamental error of what Karl Marx justly calls capitalistic vulgarity of thought.

When man started on his career, after having got beyond the state of the savage, he realized that cooperation was a necessity to him. He understood that together with others he could face his enemies in a better way than alone; he could hunt, fish, fight more successfully. Following the instructions of the great writer Morgan—the only great and original American writer upon this question—we look to the Indian communities, the Indian settlements, as a type of the social system that our ancestors, all of them, without exception, went through at some time.

The Indian lived in the community condition. The Indian lived under a system of common property. As Franklin described it, in a sketch of the history and alleged sacredness of private property, there was no such thing as private property among the Indians. They cooperated, worked together, and they had a central directing authority among them. In the Indian communities we find that central directing authority consisting of the “sachems.” It makes no difference how that central directing authority was elected; there it was. But note this: its function was to direct the cooperative or collective efforts of the communities and, in so doing, it shared actively in the productive work of the communities. Without its work, the work of the communities would not have been done.

When, in the further development of society, the tools of production grew and

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developed—grew and developed beyond the point reached by the Indian; when the art of smelting iron ore was discovered; when thereby that leading social cataclysm, wrapped in the mists of ages, yet discernible, took place that rent former communal society in twain along the line of sex, the males being able, the females unable, to wield the tool of production—then society was cast into a new mold; the former community, with its democratic equality of rights and duties, vanishes and a new social system turns up, divided into two sections, the one able, the other unable, to work at production. The line that separated these two sections, being at first the line of sex, could, in the very nature of things, not yet be sharp or deep. Yet, notwithstanding, in the very shaping of these two sections—one able, the other unable, to feed itself—we have the first premonition of the classes, of class distinctions, of the division of society into the independent and the dependent, into master and slaves, ruler and ruled.

Simultaneously, with this revolution we find the first changes in the nature of the central directing authority, of that body whose original function was to share in, by directing, production. Just as soon as economic equality is destroyed and the economic classes crop up in society, the functions of the central directing authority gradually begin to change, until finally, when, after a long range of years, moving slowly at first and then with the present hurricane velocity under capitalism proper, the tool has developed further, and further, and still further, and has reached its present fabulous perfection and magnitude; when, through its private ownership the tool has wrought a revolution within a revolution by dividing society, no longer along the line of sex, but strictly along the line of ownership or nonownership of the land on and the tool with which to work; when the privately owned, mammoth tool of today has reduced more than 52 percent of our population to the state of being utterly unable to feed without first selling themselves into wage slavery, while it at the same time saps the ground from under about 39 percent of our people, the middle class, whose puny tools, small capital, render them certain victims of competition with the large capitalist, and makes them desperate; when the economic law that asserts itself under the system of private ownership of the tool has concentrated these private owners into about 8 percent of the nation's inhabitants, has thereby enabled this small capitalist class to live without toil and

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to compel the majority, the class of the proletariat, to toil without living; when, finally, it has come to the pass in which our country now finds itself, that, as was stated in Congress, 94 percent of the taxes are spent in “protecting property”—the property of the trivially small capitalist class—and not in protecting life; when, in short, the privately owned tool has wrought this work and the classes—the idle rich and the working poor—are in full bloom—then the central directing authority of old stands transformed; its pristine functions of aiding in, by directing, production have been supplanted by the functions of holding down the dependent, the slave, the ruled, i.e., the working class. Then, and not before, lo, the state, the modern state, the capitalist state! Then, lo, the government, the modern government, the capitalist government—equipped mainly, if not solely, with the means of suppression, of oppression, of tyranny!

In sight of these manifestations of the modern state, the anarchist—the rose-water and the dirty-water variety alike—shouts: “Away with all central directing authority; see what it does; it can only do mischief; it always did mischief!” But socialism is not anarchy. Socialism does not, like the chicken in the fable, just out of the shell, start with the knowledge of that day. Socialism rejects the premises and the conclusions of anarchy upon the state and upon government. What socialism says is: “Away with the economic system that alters the beneficent functions of the central directing authority from an aid to production into a means of oppression.” And it proceeds to show that, when the instruments of production shall be owned no longer by the minority, but shall be restored to the commonwealth; that when, as a result of this, no longer the minority or any portion of the people shall be in poverty and classes, class distinctions and class rule shall, as they necessarily must, have vanished, that then the central directing authority will lose all its repressive functions and is bound to reassume the functions it had in the old communities of our ancestors, become again a necessary aid, and assist in production.

The Socialist, in the brilliant simile of Karl Marx, sees that a lone fiddler in his room needs no director; he can rap himself to order, with his fiddle to his shoulder, and start his dancing tune and stop whenever he likes. But just as soon as you have an orchestra, you must also have an orchestra director—a central directing authority. If you don’t you may have a Salvation Army powwow, you may have a

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Louisiana Negro breakdown; you may have an orthodox Jewish synagogue, where every man sings in whatever key he likes, but you won't have harmony—impossible.

It needs this central directing authority of the orchestra master to rap all the players to order at a given moment; to point out when they shall begin; when to have these play louder, when to have those play softer; when to put in this instrument, when to silence that; to regulate the time of all and preserve the accord. The orchestra director is not an oppressor, nor is his baton an insignia of tyranny; he is not there to bully anybody; he is as necessary or important as any or all of the members of the orchestra.

Our system of production is in the nature of an orchestra. No one man, no one town, no one state, can be said any longer to be independent of the other; the whole people of the United States, every individual therein, is dependent and interdependent upon all the others. The nature of the machinery of production; the subdivision of labor, which aids cooperation and which cooperation fosters, and which is necessary to the plentifulness of production that civilization requires, compel a harmonious working together of all departments of labor, and thence compel the establishment of a central directing authority, of an orchestral director, so to speak, of the orchestra of the cooperative commonwealth.

Such is the state or government that the socialist revolution carries in its womb. Today, production is left to anarchy and only tyranny, the twin sister of anarchy, is organized.

Socialism, accordingly, implies organization; organization implies directing authority; and the one and the other are strict reflections of the revolutions undergone by the tool of production. Reform, on the other hand, skims the surface, and with “referendums” and similar devices limits itself to external tinkering.

### MATERIALISM—MORALITY

The second nerve center of socialism that will serve to illustrate the difference between reform and revolution is its materialistic groundwork.

Take, for instance, the history of slavery. All of our ancestors—this may shock some of you, but it is a fact all the same—all of our ancestors were cannibals at one time. The human race, in its necessity to seek for food, often found it easier to make

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a raid and take from others the food they had gathered. In those olden, olden days of the barbarism of our ancestors, when they conquered a people and took away its property, they had no further use for the conquered; they killed them, spitted them over a good fire, roasted and ate them up. It was a simple and the only profitable way known of disposing of prisoners of war. They did with their captives very much what bees do yet; when they have raided and conquered a hive they ruthlessly kill every single denizen of the captured hive.

Our ancestors continued cannibals until their social system had developed sufficiently to enable them to keep their prisoners under control. From that moment they found it more profitable to keep their prisoners of war alive and turn them into slaves to work for them, than it was to kill them off and eat them up. With that stage of material development, cannibalism was dropped. From the higher material plane on which our ancestors then stood, their moral vision enlarged and they presently realized that it was immoral to eat up a human being.

Cannibalism disappears to make room for chattel slavery. And what do we see? Watch the process of “moral development” in this country—the classic ground in many ways to study history in, for the reason that the whole development of mankind can be seen here, portrayed in a few years, so to speak. You know how, today, the Northern people put on airs of morality on the score of having “abolished chattel slavery,” the “traffic in human flesh,” “gone down South and fought, and bled, to free the Negro,” etc., etc. Yet we know that just as soon as manufacturing was introduced in the North, the North found that it was too expensive to own the Negro and take care of him; that it was much cheaper not to own the worker; and, consequently, that they “religiously,” “humanely” and “morally” sold their slaves to the South, while they transformed the white people of the North, who had no means of production in their own hands, into wage slaves, and mercilessly ground them down. In the North, chattel slavery disappeared just as soon as the development of machinery rendered the institution unprofitable. The immorality of chattel slavery became clear to the North just as soon as, standing upon that higher plane that its higher material development raised it to, it acquired a better vision. The benighted South, on the contrary, that had no machinery, remained with eyes shut, and she stuck to slavery till the slave was knocked out of her fists.

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Guided by the light of this and many similar lessons of history, socialism builds upon the principle that the “moral sentiment,” as illustrated by the fate of the slave, is not the cause, but a powerful aid to revolutions. The moral sentiment is to a movement as important as the sails are to a ship. Nevertheless, important though sails are, unless a ship is well laden, unless she is soundly, properly and scientifically constructed, the more sails you pile on and spread out, the surer she is to capsize. So with the organizations that are to carry out a revolution. Unless your socialist organizations are as sound as a bell; unless they are as intolerant as science; unless they will plant themselves squarely on the principle that two and two make four and under no circumstances allow that they make five, the more feeling you put into them, the surer they are to capsize and go down. On the contrary, load your revolutionary ship with the proper lading of science; hold her strictly to the lodestar; try no monkeyshines and no dillyings and dallyings with anything that is not strictly scientific, or with any man who does not stand on our uncompromisingly scientific platform; do that, and then unfurl freely the sails of morality; then the more your sails, the better off your ship; but not unless you do that, will you be safe, or can you prevail.

Socialism knows that revolutionary upheavals and transformations proceed from the rock bed of material needs. With a full appreciation of and veneration for moral impulses that are balanced with scientific knowledge, it eschews, looks with just suspicion upon and gives a wide berth to balloon morality, or be it those malarial fevers that reformers love to dignify with the name of “moral feelings.”

### THE CLASS STRUGGLE

A third nerve center of socialism by which to distinguish reform from revolution is its manly, aggressive posture.

The laws that rule sociology run upon lines parallel with and are the exact counterparts of those that natural science has established in biology.

In the first place, the central figure in biology is the species, not the individual specimen. In sociology, the economic classes take the place of the species in biology. Consequently, that is the central figure on the field of sociology that corresponds to and represents the species on the field of biology.

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In the second place, struggle, and not piping peace; assimilation by the ruthless process of the expulsion of all elements that are not fit for assimilation, and not external coalition—such are the laws of growth in biology, and such are and needs must be the laws of growth in sociology.

Hence, socialism recognizes in modern society the existence of a struggle of classes, and the line that divides the combatants to be the economic line that separates the interests of the property-holding capitalist class from the interests of the propertyless class of the proletariat. As a final result of this, socialism, with the Nazarene, spurns as futile, if not wicked, the method of cajolery and seduction, or the crying of “Peace, peace, where there is no peace,” and cuts a clean swath, while reform is eternally entangled in its course of charming, luring, decoying.

### ILLUSTRATIONS

Let me now give you a few specific illustrations—based upon this general sketch—that may help to point out more clearly the sharp differences there are between reform and revolution, and the grave danger there lurks behind confounding the two.

You remember I referred to the fact that internal, i.e., revolutionary changes, are always accompanied with external changes of some sort, and that therein lay a pitfall into which reform invariably tumbled, inasmuch as reform habitually rests satisfied with externals, allows itself to be deceived with appearances. For instance:

The socialist revolution demands, among other things, the public ownership of all the means of transportation. But, in itself, the question of ownership affects only external forms: The Post Office is the common property of the people, and yet the real workers in that department are mere wage slaves. In the mouth of the Socialist, of the revolutionist, the internal fact, the cardinal truth, that for which alone we fight, and which alone is entitled to all we can give to it—that is the abolition of the system of wage slavery under which the proletariat is working. Now, up step the Populists—the dupers, not the duped among them—with a plan to nationalize the railroads. The standpoint from which they proceed is that of middle-class interests as against the interests of the upper capitalists or monopolists. The railroad monopolists are now fleecing the middle class; these want to turn the tables upon their exploiters; they want to abolish them, wipe them out, and appropriate

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unto themselves the fleecings of the working class which the railroad monopolists now monopolize. With this reactionary class interest in mind the duper—Populist—steps forward and holds this plausible language:

“We, too, want the nationalization of the roads; we are going your way; join us!”

The reform straws are regularly taken in by this seeming truth; they are carried off their feet; and they are drawn heels over head into the vortex of capitalist conflicts. Not so the revolutionist. His answer follows sharp and clear:

“Excuse me! Guess you do want to nationalize the railroads, but only as a reform; we want nationalization as a revolution. You do not propose, while we are fixedly determined, to relieve the railroad workers of the yoke of wage slavery under which they now grunt and sweat. By your scheme of nationalization, you do not propose, on the contrary, you oppose all relief to the workers, and you have set dogs at the heels of our propagandists in Chautauqua County, N.Y., whenever it was proposed to reduce the hours of work of the employees.”

While we, the revolutionists, seek the emancipation of the working class and the abolition of all exploitation, duper-populism seeks to rivet the chains of wage slavery more firmly upon the proletariat. There is no exploiter like the middle-class exploiter. Carnegie may fleece his workers—he has 20,000 of them—of only 50 cents a day and yet net, from sunrise to sunset, \$10,000 profits; the banker with plenty of money to lend can thrive with a trifling shaving of each individual note; but the apple woman on the street corner must make a 100 and 500 percent profit to exist. For the same reason, the middle class, the employer of few hands, is the worst, the bitterest, the most inveterate, the most relentless exploiter of the wage slave. You may now realize what a grave error that man will incur who will rest satisfied with external appearance. Reform is invariably a cat’s paw for dupers; revolution never.

Take now an illustration of the revolutionary principle that the material plane on which man stands determines his perception of morality. One man writes to *The People* office: “You speak about the immorality of capitalism, don’t you know that it was immoral to demonetize silver?” Another writes: “How queer to hear you talk about immorality; don’t you know it is a type of immorality to have a protective tariff?” He wants free trade. A third one writes: “Oh, sir, I admire the moral sentiment that inspires you, but how can you make fun of prohibition? Don’t you

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know that if a man is drunk, he will beat his wife and kill his children?" And so forth. Each of these looks at morality from the standpoint of his individual or class interests: The man who owns a silver mine considers it the height of immorality to demonetize silver. The importer who can be benefited by free trade thinks it a heinous crime against good morals to set up a high tariff. The man whose wage slaves come on Monday somewhat boozy, so that he cannot squeeze, pilfer out of them as much wealth as he would like to, becomes a pietistic prohibitionist.

One of our great men, a really great man, a man whom I consider a glory to the United States—Artemus Ward—with that genuine, not bogus, keen Yankee eye of his saw, and with that master pen of his excellently illustrated this scientific truth, with one of his yarns. He claimed, you know, that he traveled through the country with a collection of wax figures representing the great men and criminals of the time. On one occasion he was in Maine. At about that time a little boy, Wilkins, had killed his uncle. Of course, the occurrence created a good deal of a sensation, and Artemus Ward tells us that, having an eye to the main chance, he got up a wax figure which he exhibited as Wilkins, the boy murderer. A few years later, happening again in the same Maine village, it occurred to him that the boy Wilkins had proved a great attraction in the place. He hunted around among his figures, found none small enough to represent a boy, and he took the wax figure that he used to represent Captain Kidd with, labeled that "Wilkins, the Boy Murderer," and opened his booth. The people flocked in, paid their 15 cents admission, and Artemus started to explain his figures. When he reached the "Boy Murderer," and was expatiating upon the lad's wickedness, a man in the audience rose, and in a rasping, nasal voice, remarked: "How is that? Three years ago you showed us the boy, Wilkins, he was a boy then, and died since; how can he now be a big man?" Thereupon Artemus says: "I was angry at the rascal, and I should have informed against him, and have him locked up for treason to the flag."

With the master hand of genius Artemus here exposed the material bases of capitalist "patriotism," and pointed to the connection between the two. The material plane, on which the fraudulent showman stood, determined his moral impulse on patriotism.

The higher the economic plane on which a class stands, and the sounder its

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understanding of material conditions, all the broader will its horizon be, and, consequently, all the purer and truer its morality. Hence it is that, today, the highest moral vision, and the truest withal, is found in the camp of the revolutionary proletariat. Hence, also, you will perceive the danger of the moral cry that goes not hand in hand with sound knowledge. The morality of reform is the coruscation of the ignis fatuus; the morality of revolution is lighted by the steady light of science.

Take another illustration, this time on the belligerent poise of socialism, to distinguish reform from revolution.

The struggles that mark the movements of man have ever proceeded from the material interests, not of individuals, but of classes. The class interests on top, when rotten-ripe for overthrow, succumbed, when they did succumb, to nothing short of the class interests below. Individuals from the former class frequently took leading and invaluable part on the side of the latter, and individuals of the latter regularly played the role of traitors to civilization by siding with the former, as did, for instance, the son of the venerable Franklin when he sided with the British. Yet in both sets of instances, the combatants stood arrayed upon platforms that represented opposite class interests. Revolutions triumphed, whenever they did triumph, by asserting themselves and marching straight upon their goal. On the other hand, the fate of Wat Tyler ever is the fate of reform. The rebels, in this instance, were weak enough to allow themselves to be wheedled into placing their movement into the hands of Richard II, who promised “relief”—and brought it by marching the men to the gallows.

You will perceive the danger run by movements that—instead of accepting no leadership except such as stands squarely upon their own demands—rest content with and entrust themselves to “promises of relief.” Revolution, accordingly, stands on its own bottom, hence it cannot be overthrown; reform leans upon others, hence its downfall is certain. Of all revolutionary epochs, the present draws sharpest the line between the conflicting class interests. Hence, the organizations of the revolution of our generation must be the most uncompromising of any that yet appeared on the stage of history. The program of this revolution consists not in any one detail. It demands the unconditional surrender of the capitalist system and its

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system of wage slavery; the total extinction of class rule is its object. Nothing short of that—whether as a first, a temporary, or any other sort of step can at this late date receive recognition in the camp of the modern revolution.

Upon these lines we organized in New York and Brooklyn, and prospered; upon these lines we have compelled the respect of the foe. And I say unto you, Go ye, and do likewise.

### THE REFORMER—THE REVOLUTIONIST

And now to come to, in a sense, the most important, surely the most delicate, of any of the various subdivisions of this address. We know that movements make men, but men make movements. Movements cannot exist unless they are carried on by men; in the last analysis it is the human hand and the human brain that serve as the instruments of revolutions. How shall the revolutionist be known? Which are the marks of the reformer? In New York a reformer cannot come within smelling distance of us but we can tell him. We know him; we have experienced him; we know what mischief he can do; and he cannot get within our ranks if we can help it. He must organize an opposition organization, and thus fulfill the only good mission he has in the scheme of nature—pull out from among us whatever reformers may be hiding there.

But you may not yet be familiar with the cut of the reformer's jib. You may not know the external marks of the revolutionist. Let me mention them.

The modern revolutionist, i.e., the Socialist, must, in the first place, by reason of the sketch I presented to you upon the development of the state, necessarily work in organization, with all that that implies. In this you have the first characteristic that distinguishes the revolutionist from the reformer; the reformer spurns organization; his symbol is "Five Sore Fingers on a Hand"—far apart from one another.

The modern revolutionist knows full well that man is not superior to principle, that principle is superior to man, but he does not fly off the handle with the maxim and thus turn the maxim into absurdity. He firmly couples the maxim with this other that no principle is superior to the movement or organization that puts it and upholds it in the field. The engineer knows that steam is a powerful thing, but he

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also knows that unless the steam is in the boiler, and unless there is a knowing hand at the throttle, the steam will either evaporate or the boiler will burst. Hence, you will never hear an engineer say: “Steam is the thing,” and then kick the locomotive off the track. Similarly, the revolutionist recognizes that the organization that is propelled by correct principles is as the boiler that must hold the steam, or the steam will amount to nothing. He knows that in the revolution demanded by our age, organization must be the incarnation of principle. Just the reverse of the reformer, who will ever be seen mocking at science, the revolutionist will not make a distinction between the organization and the principle. He will say: “The principle and the organization are one.”

A Western judge, on one occasion, had to do with a quibbling lawyer, who was defending a burglar—you know what a burglar is—and rendered a decision that was supremely wise. The prisoner was charged with having stuck his hand and arm through a window and stolen something, whatever it was. The judge sentenced the man to the penitentiary. Said the lawyer: “I demur; the whole of the man did not break through the window; it was only his arm.” “Well,” said the judge, “I will sentence the arm; let him do with the body what he likes.” As the man and his arm were certainly one, and as the man would not wrench his arm out of its socket and separate it from the body, he quietly went to the penitentiary, and I hope is there yet to serve as a permanent warning against “reform science.”

Again, the modern revolutionist knows that in order to accomplish results or promote principle, there must be unity of action. He knows that, if we do not go in a body and hang together, we are bound to hang separate. Hence, you will ever see the revolutionist submit to the will of the majority; you will always see him readiest to obey; he recognizes that obedience is the badge of civilized man. The savage does not know the word. The word “obedience” does not exist in the vocabulary of any language until its people got beyond the stage of savagery. Hence, also, you will never find the revolutionist putting himself above the organization. The opposite conduct is an unmistakable earmark of reformers.

The revolutionist recognizes that the present machinery and methods of production render impossible—and well it is they do—the individual freedom of man such as our savage ancestors knew the thing; that today, the highest

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individual freedom must go hand in hand with collective freedom; and none such is possible without a central directing authority. Standing upon this vigor-imparting high plane of civilization, the revolutionist is virile and self-reliant, in striking contrast with the mentally sickly and, therefore, suspicious reformer. Hence the cry of "Bossism!" is as absent from the revolutionist's lips as it is a feature on those of the reformer.

Another leading mark of the revolutionist, which is paralleled with the opposite mark on the reformer, is the consistency, hence morality, of the former, and the inconsistency, hence immorality, of the latter. As the revolutionist proceeds upon facts he is truthful and his course is steady; on the other hand, the reformer will ever be found prevaricating and in perpetual contradiction of himself. The reformer, for instance, is ever vamping against "tyranny," and yet watch him; give him rope enough and you will always see him straining to be the top man in the shebang, the man on horseback, the autocrat, whose whim shall be law. The reformer is ever prating about "morality," but just give him a chance, and you will catch him every time committing the most immoral acts, as, for instance, sitting in judgment on cases in which he himself is a particeps criminis, or countenancing and profiting by such acts. The reformer's mouth is ever full with the words "individual freedom," yet in the whole catalog of defiers of individual freedom, the reformer vies with the frontmost.

Finally, you will find the reformer ever flying off at a tangent, while the revolutionist sticks to the point. The scatterbrained reformer is ruled by a centrifugal, the revolutionist by a centripetal force. Some-body has aptly said that in social movements an evil principle is like a scorpion; it carries the poison that will kill it. So with the reformers; they carry the poison of disintegration that breaks them up into twos and ones and thus deprives them in the end of all power for mischief; while the power of the revolutionist to accomplish results grows with the gathering strength that its posture insures to him.

The lines upon which we organize in New York and Brooklyn are, accordingly, directly opposed to those of reformers. We recognize the need of organization with all that that implies—of organization, whose scientific basis and uncompromising posture inspire respect in the foe, and confidence in those who belong with us. This

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is the sine qua non for success.

Right here allow me to digress for a moment. Keep in mind where I break off that we may hitch on again all the easier.

Did you ever stop to consider why it is that in this country where opportunities are so infinitely superior, the working-class movement is so far behind, whereas in Europe, despite the disadvantages there, it is so far ahead of us? Let me tell you.<sup>1</sup>

### THE WORK OF THE CHARLATANS

In the first place, the tablets of the minds of our working class are scribbled all over by every charlatan who has let himself loose. In Europe, somehow or other, the men who were able to speak respected and respect themselves a good deal more than most of our public speakers do here. They studied first; they first drank deep at the fountain of science; and not until they felt their feet firmly planted on the rock bed of fact and reason, did they go before the masses. So it happens that the tablets of the minds of the European, especially the Continental working classes, have lines traced upon them by the master hands of the ages. Hence every succeeding new movement brought forward by the tides of time found its work paved for and easier. But here, one charlatan after another who could speak glibly, and who could get money from this, that or the other political party, would go among the people and upon the tablets of the minds of the working classes he scribbled his crude text. So it happens that today, when the apostle of socialism goes before our people, he cannot do what his compeers in Europe do, take a pencil and draw upon the minds of his hearers the letters of science; no, he must first clutch a sponge, a stout one, and wipe clean the pothooks that the charlatans have left there. Not until he has done that can he begin to preach and teach successfully.

### FAKE MOVEMENTS

Then, again, with this evil of miseducation, the working class of this country suffers from another. The charlatans, one after the other, set up movements that proceeded upon lines of ignorance; movements that were denials of scientific facts; movements that bred hopes in the hearts of the people; yet movements that had to collapse. A movement must be perfectly sound, and scientifically based or it cannot stand. A falsely based movement is like a lie, and a lie cannot survive. All these

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false movements came to grief, and what was the result?—disappointment, stagnation, diffidence, hopelessness in the masses.

### K. OF L.

The Knights of Labor, meant by Uriah Stephens, as he himself admitted, to be reared upon the scientific principles of socialism—principles found today in no central or national organization of labor outside of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance—sank into the mire. Uriah Stephens was swept aside; ignoramuses took hold of the organization; a million and a half men went into it, hoping for salvation; but, instead of salvation, there came from the veils of the K of L Local, District and General Assemblies the developed ignoramuses, that is to say, the labor fakers, riding the workingman and selling him out to the exploiter. Disappointed, the masses fell off.

### A.F. OF L.

Thereupon bubbled up another wondrous concern, another idiosyncrasy—the American Federation of Labor, appropriately called by its numerous English organizers the American Federation of Hell. Ignoramuses again took hold and the lead. They failed to seek below the surface for the cause of the failure of the K of L; like genuine ignoramuses, they fluttered over the surface. They saw on the surface excessive concentration of power in the K of L, and they swung to the other extreme—they built a tapeworm. I call it a tapeworm, because a tapeworm is no organism; it is an aggregation of links with no cohesive powers worth mentioning. The fate of the K of L overtook the AF of L Like causes brought on like results, false foundations brought on ruin and failure. Strike upon strike proved disastrous in all concentrated industries; wages and the standard of living of the working class at large went down; the unemployed multiplied; and again the ignorant leaders naturally and inevitably developed into approved labor fakers; the workers found themselves shot, clubbed, indicted, imprisoned by the identical presidents, governors, mayors, judges, etc.—Republican and Democratic—whom their misleaders had corruptly induced them to support.

Today there is no AF of L—not even the tapeworm—any more. If you reckon it

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up, you will find that if the 250,000 members which it claims paid dues regularly every quarter, it must have four times as large a fund as it reports. The fact is the dues are paid for the last quarter only; the fakers see to this to the end that they may attend the annual rowdiedow called the “AF of L Convention”—and advertise themselves to the politicians. That’s all there is left of it. It is a ship, never seaworthy, but now stranded and captured by a handful of pirates; a tapeworm pulled to pieces, contemned by the rank and file of the American proletariat. Its career only filled still fuller the workers’ measure of disappointment, diffidence, helplessness.

### SINGLE TAX

The Henry George movement was another of these charlatan booms that only helped still more to dispirit people in the end. The “single tax,” with its half-antiquated, half-idiotic reasoning, took the field. Again great expectations were raised all over the country—for a while. Again a semieconomic lie proved a broken reed to lean on. Down came Humpty Dumpty, and all the king’s horses and all the king’s men could not now put Humpty Dumpty together again. Thus the volume of popular disappointment and diffidence received a further contribution.

### POPULISM

Most recently there came along the People’s Party movement. Oh, how fine it talked! It was going to emancipate the workers. Did it not say so in its preamble, however reactionary its platform? If bluff and blarney could save a movement, the People’s Party would have been imperishable. But it went up like a rocket, and is now fast coming down a stick. In New York State it set itself up against us when we already had 14,000 votes, and had an official standing. It was going to teach us “dreamers” a lesson in “practical American politics.” Well, its vote never reached ours, and last November when we rose to 21,000 votes, it dropped to barely 5,000, lost its official standing as a party in the state, and as far as New York and Brooklyn are concerned, we simply mopped the floor with it.

These false movements, and many more kindred circumstances that I could mention, have confused the judgment of our people, weakened the spring of their

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hope, and abashed their courage. Hence the existing popular apathy in the midst of popular misery; hence despondency despite unequalled opportunities for redress; hence the backwardness of the movement here when compared with that of Europe.

To return now where I broke off. The Socialist Labor Party cannot, in our country, fulfill its mission—here less than anywhere else—without it takes a stand, the scientific soundness of whose position renders growth certain, failure impossible, and without its disciplinary firmness earns for it the unqualified confidence of the now eagerly onlooking masses both in its integrity of purpose and its capacity to enforce order. It is only thus that we can hope to rekindle the now low-burning spark of manhood and womanhood in our American working class, and reconjure up the Spirit of '76.

### THE S.L.P. THE HEAD OF THE COLUMN

We know full well that the race or class that is not virile enough to strike an intelligent blow for itself, is not fit for emancipation. If emancipated by others, it will need constant propping, or will collapse like a dish clout. While that is true, this other is true also: In all revolutionary movements, as in the storming of fortresses, the thing depends upon the head of the column—upon that minority that is so intense in its convictions, so soundly based on its principles, so determined in its action, that it carries the masses with it, storms the breastworks and captures the fort. Such a head of the column must be our socialist organization to the whole column of the American proletariat.

Again our American history furnishes a striking illustration. When Pizarro landed on the western slope of the Andes, he had with him about 115 men. Beyond the mountains was an empire—the best organized empire of the aborigines that had been found in America. It had its departments; it had its classes; it was managed as one body, numbering hundreds of thousands to the Spaniards' hundred. That body the small army of determined men were to capture. What did Pizarro do? Did he say: "Let us wait till we get some more"? Or did he say: "Now, boys, I need every one of you 115 men"? No, he said to them: "Brave men of Spain, yonder lies an empire that is a delight to live in; full of gold; full of wealth; full of heathens that we ought to convert. They are as the sands of the sea, compared with us, and they are entrenched behind their

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mountain fastnesses. It needs the staunchest among you to undertake the conquest. If any, through the hardships of travel, feel unequal to the hardships of the enterprise, I shall not consider him a coward; let him stand back to protect our ships. Let only those stay with me who are determined to fight, and who are determined to conquer.” About 20 men stood aside, about 95 remained; with 95 determined men he scaled those mountains and conquered that empire.

That empire of the Incas is today capitalism, both in point of its own inherent weakness and the strength of its position. The army that is to conquer it is the army of the proletariat, the head of whose column must consist of the intrepid socialist organization that has earned their love, their respect, their confidence.

What do we see today? At every recent election, the country puts me in mind of a jar of water—turn the jar and all the water comes out. One election, all the Democratic vote drops out and goes over to the Republicans; the next year all the Republican vote drops out and goes over to the Democrats. The workers are moving backward and forward; they are dissatisfied; they have lost confidence in the existing parties they know of, and they are seeking desperately for the party of their class. At such a season, it is the duty of us revolutionists to conduct ourselves in such manner as to cause our organization to be better and better known, its principles more and more clearly understood, its integrity and firmness more and more respected and trusted—then, when we shall have stood that ground well and grown steadily, the masses will in due time flock over to us. In the crash that is sure to come and is now just ahead of us, our steadfast socialist organization will alone stand out intact above the ruins; there will then be a stampede to our party—but only upon revolutionary lines can it achieve this; upon lines of reform it can never be victorious.

As the chairman said that time would be allowed for questions, I shall close at this point, but not before—you will pardon the assumption—not before I call upon you, in the name of the 6,000 “wicked,” revolutionary Socialists of New York and Brooklyn, to organize, here in Boston, upon the genuinely revolutionary plan. Your state is a large manufacturing state; there can be no reason why your vote should not grow, except that, somehow or other, you have not acted as revolutionists. Every year that goes by in this way is a year wasted. Never forget that every incident that

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takes place within your, within our, ranks is noted by a large number of workers on the outside. Tamper with discipline, allow this member to do as he likes, that member to slap the party Constitution in the face, yonder member to fuse with reformers, this other to forget the nature of the class struggle and to act up to his forgetfulness—allow that, keep such “reformers” in your ranks and you have stabbed your movement at its vitals. With malice toward none, with charity to all, you must enforce discipline if you mean to reorganize to a purpose. We know that in struggles of this kind, personal feelings, unfortunately, play a part; you cannot prevent that; let the other side, the reformer, fill the role of malice that its weak intellect drives it to; do you fill the role of the square-jointed revolutionist—and if there must be amputation, do it nobly, but firmly. Remember the adage that the tenderhanded surgeon makes stinging wounds, and lengthens the period of suffering and pain. The surgeon that has a firm hand to push the knife as deep as it ought to go, and pulls it out, and lets the pus flow out, that surgeon makes clean wounds, shortens pain, brings cure quickly about.

No organization will inspire the outside masses with respect that will not insist upon and enforce discipline within its own ranks. If you allow your own members to play monkeyshines with the party, the lookers-on, who belong in this camp, will justly believe that you will at some critical moment allow capitalism to play monkeyshines with you; they will not respect you, and their accession to your ranks will be delayed.

There is, indeed, no social or economic reason why the vote of Boston should not be one of the pillars of our movement. And yet that vote is weak and virtually stationary, while in New York and Brooklyn it has on the whole been leaping forward. If you realize the importance of the revolutionary construction of our army; if you comprehend the situation of the country—that there is a popular tidal wave coming; that, in order to bring it our way and render it effective, we must be deserving thereof, whereas, if we are not, the wave will recede with disastrous results; if you properly appreciate the fact that every year that passes over our heads brings to our lives greater danger, throws a heavier load upon the shoulders of our wives, makes darker the prospects of our sons, exposes still more the honor of our daughters—if you understand that, then for their sakes, for our country’s sake,

for the sake of the proletarians of Boston, organize upon the New York and Brooklyn plan.

## **QUESTIONS**

MR. DOOLING—I would like to inquire what it is proposed shall replace wages? How are men to be supported when wages are done away with? Upon the answer to that question will depend largely whether the middle class will support socialism.

THE SPEAKER—I must disagree with the gentleman that the middle class is going to be brought into this movement by any information upon what is going to be substituted for wages. The middle class will have to be sold at auction by the sheriff. That alone will enlighten it as a class. When it has lost its property, whereby it is now skinning some unhappy devils, and its members have themselves become wage slaves, then it will see what this whole question of wages amounts to, and what should “substitute wages.”

Individuals among the middle class may, however, be intelligent enough to study the question and, in that way, to learn, before they become wage slaves, the secret of the wages question.

Now, what are wages? Wages are that part of the product of labor which the capitalist pays to the workingman out of the proceeds of the workingman’s own products. Say that a workingman produces \$4 a day, and that \$1 is paid him for his labor. That \$1 is taken out of the wealth that he himself produces, and it is kindly given back to him by the capitalist, who pockets the other \$3. That is one feature of wages.

Another is that wages are the price of labor in the labor market, and that in the labor market, labor stands on the same footing as any other commodity; it is governed by the law of supply and demand; its price, the same as that of anything else—hairpins, shoes or cast-off clothing—is determined by the law of supply and demand; the more there is of these, the cheaper their price. Likewise with labor. Under the capitalist system, labor is a commodity in the market.<sup>1</sup> The workingman must sell his labor, which he gets paid for with the thing called wages, at the market price. If the supply of labor is so much larger than the demand, then,

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instead of getting his one dollar out of the four that he produces in the illustration above given, he may get only 95 cents; if the demand for labor goes down further, he may get 90 cents as the price of his labor; and if it goes still further below the supply, still further down would go the price of labor, i.e., wages. The price of labor may sink to I don't know how low a level.

Some of you may say that the workingman has to live, and there is a limit. No, there is no limit. The only limit that there is is a limit to the rapidity of the decline. Wages cannot fall from a hundred cents to 10 cents, but they can fall by easy gradations even below 10 cents.

We have, for instance, this story about the Chinese that in some places they live only upon the rats they catch; that in other places, their stomachs having been squeezed still more, they live upon the tails of rats that others ate; and that in still other places there are Chinamen who live upon the smell of the tail of the rats. This may sound like a joke, and yet there is more truth than poetry about it.

In the history of France we have it reported that large masses of the population lived, in the 18th century, during the ancient regime, upon herbs, the price of which for the whole year would not have been 5 francs. The human stomach is like an India rubber ball; you can squeeze it, and squeeze it, and squeeze it, and you can shave off and pare off the wants of the workingman till his wants are merely those of the beast.

Wages, then, are the part of the product of labor which the capitalist allows the workingman to keep, and which the capitalist does not steal, along with the other three parts.

Now, then, for the same reason that wages are what I have said, there can be, under socialism, no "wages," because sticking to my previous illustration, under socialism that workingman must get all the four dollars which he produces.

What are the things which compel the workingman today to receive wages?

First—The capitalist class owns all the things necessary to produce with; it holds the land, the railroads and the machinery with which to labor. The working class owns none of these necessities, all of which it needs to labor with; hence it must sell itself.

Second—The reason why the wage worker must put up with so small a return

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is that under this system he is not treated as a human being, Christianity to the contrary notwithstanding. The capitalists are refined cannibals; they look at the workingman in no other light than a horse; in fact, in a worse light; they will take care of a horse, but let the workingmen die. Labor is cheap, and is treated that way under capitalism. Under socialism, standing upon that high scientific plane, we see a higher morality. We see that labor should not be treated as a chattel; it should not be treated as a commodity; it should not be treated as shoes, and potatoes and hairpins and cast-off clothing, but as a human being capable of the highest intellectual development. So treating him, the wageworker of today becomes a part owner in the machinery of production, and being part owner in the machinery of production he then gets the full return of his labor; he is then free from the shackles that compel him to accept wages; he becomes the boss of the machine, whereas today he is its appendage.

Under socialism, we don't need potato bugs, as a friend puts it, to raise potatoes. Some people think that the wageworker class must carry the capitalist on its back. As well say that you must have potato bugs, or you won't have any potatoes. If you remove the potato bugs, you will have all the more potatoes; remove the capitalist class and you will have the whole of your product; there will not then be any potato bug, i.e., capitalist, to sponge up the bulk of your product.

JOHN F. O'SULLIVAN, president of Boston Central Labor Union—I should like to ask the speaker if the \$4, as per the illustration, given to the worker—in other words, if he gets the full product of his labor or work—wouldn't that be wages all the same?

THE SPEAKER—If you choose to call water Paris green, that's your business. Suppose I came to you and said: "Paris green is not poisonous, it is an excellent thing for the human system"; and suppose I went on saying: "See here, I am taking Paris green, look at me." (Taking a glass of water and drinking.) "You see, it refreshes and does not kill me!" What would you think of that? You would be justified to say I was juggling with words. And that is what I tell you. You have no right to call water Paris green; it is known all the world over as water, and Paris green is known as Paris green, a poison.

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Now in the same way “wages” is a technical term. The term means in political economy that portion of the product of labor that the workingman is allowed to keep, and that is not stolen from him by the capitalist. Now you may say, “Well, granted; but suppose we call the revenue of a man his wages, and I mean by that the full proceeds of his labor—wouldn’t that be the same?” Yes, it would be the same if you mean the right thing, but here I would warn you—and in that consists one of the “wickednesses” of us New York and Brooklyn Socialists—we insist upon strict, technical terms, because if you juggle with terms in that way you will have a Tower of Babel confusion. The Bible, which I recommend to you to read carefully, furnishes in its Tower of Babel story a warning worth taking to heart. When the Lord wanted to confuse the Jews so that they shouldn’t build that tower and get into heaven by that route, he introduced the confusion of language among them. Thereupon, when a man said, “Bring me a brick,” they brought him a chair, and when a man said, “Bring me a chair,” they struck him over the head with a crowbar; and so, not being able to understand one another, the building of the tower was given up, and the people scattered to the four winds.

Now, we Socialists brace ourselves against all Tower of Babel confusion. When we say “wages,” we mean the thing that is so styled by scientific political economy, and we won’t allow its well-marked and sharply drawn character to be blurred. Wages are what they are understood to be technically, and we call them by no other name. The \$4 your workmen would get would not be “wages.” Those \$4 would be the proceeds of labor. Today he gets wages, and wages mean only that part of his product, as I said before, which capital does not steal away from him.

Unless you define wages in that way, you will not be able to have a clear, scientific understanding of what profits are, namely, that portion of the product of labor which the capitalist does steal from the worker. The worker produces a certain amount of wealth, and that is divided into two parts. One small part is called wages; the big part is called profits. Now, by sticking to scientific definitions, we are aided in the understanding of the nature of capitalism, and the relations that exist between the capitalist class and the workmen’s class. We are aided in understanding that capital, i.e., the capitalist class, and labor are enemies born. Since wages are a part of the product of labor, and profits are another part, it

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follows that you cannot increase profits without reducing wages, and you cannot increase wages without reducing profits. It follows that the interests of the man who gets profits are dead against the interests of the working class. In other words, the two are enemies born, and the fight between them cannot be patched up—it must be fought to a finish.

You will now understand the danger of a loose use of the word “wages”; it simply aids the labor faker—[Loud and prolonged applause, during which someone on the platform whispered to the speaker that the questioner was a notorious Boston labor faker]—It seems that I hit the nail more squarely on the head than I knew. Well, as I was saying: Such loose use of the term “wages” positively aids the labor faker in his work of bunco-steering you into the political shambles of the capitalists.

The Democratic and Republican capitalists, at election time, seem to be enemies; but, after they get into their offices, shake hands and have a good laugh. Now, in order that these gentlemen should laugh, the political agents of their class must have been kept in office, and the representatives of the working class must have been kept out. To have that, the workingmen must have voted for the capitalist candidates—it matters not whether Democratic or Republican, that is all one; and to induce the workers to cut their own throats in that way, they must be made to believe that “capital and labor are brothers.” This is the important work for which the labor faker is commissioned by the capitalists. He must make it plausible to the workers that they and their skimmers are brothers.

So long as a workingman imagines capital is his brother, he will expect something from his “brother.” When the Irish worker first arrived in this country, he thought an Irishman all the world over was his brother and united with him against the “iron heel of England,” and thus he trusted the Irishman capitalist. But his “brother,” the Irishman capitalist, while patting him on the back, skinned and bled and used him in the approved capitalist way. It was the same with the Jewish workingmen. They came to this country, and imagined that the Jewish capitalist was their brother—all of the seed of Abraham. The Jewish capitalist fostered the profitable delusion and rode on the backs of his Abrahamic brothers. And so with the American capitalist and the American workingman, down to the end of the list

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of nationalities.

By insisting upon a strict use of the terms “wages,” “profits,” etc., we enable the working class to understand and proceed from the fundamental truth that the interests of the workingmen bind these together, and are opposed to those of the capitalist—whether Jew or Gentile, Irishman or American, Democrat or Republican, silver bug or gold bug or bed bug. And by doing that we lame the arm of the labor faker that is sent to tell the workingman: “The capitalist is your brother; and I am your brother; so come to your dear brother, and get skinned.”

QUESTION (no name)—The social question is an economic question. Why should not an economic organization be enough?

THE SPEAKER—The social question and all such questions are essentially political. If you have an economic organization alone, you have a duck flying with one wing; you must have a political organization or you are nowhere. Watch the capitalist closely, and see whether the social question is exclusively an economic one, or whether the political wing is not a very necessary one. The capitalist rules in the shop. Is he satisfied with that? Watch him at election time, it is then he works; he has also another workshop, not an economic one—the legislatures and capitols in the nation. He buzzes around them and accomplishes political results. He gets the laws passed that will protect his economic class interests, and he pulls the wires when these interests are in danger, bringing down the strong arm of political power over the heads of the striking workingmen, who have the notion that the wages or social question is only an economic question.

Make no mistake: The organization of the working class must be both economic and political. The capitalist is organized upon both lines. You must attack him on both.

(THE END)