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What Socialism Is

Socialism and Christmas. How incongruous this specter, stalking forth when all is joy and merrymaking! How it must cast a chill upon the festivities - this fearsome thing - that is abroad in our land! But close your doors, good people, and draw down the blinds, so that you may not see it, and give the reins of your imagination to your curiosity; then picture this dreadful monster with all the terrorism your fear may suggest.

Alas! It has always been your policy to close the door and draw the blind when the poor fellow comes by. You have never seen him; you are ignorant of him; and yet your very ignorance paints, with vivid coloring, his horrid picture.

Let us interrogate socialism, and try and obtain a more legitimate knowledge of it.

Socialism is commonly the synonym for any lawless, revolutionary scheme, projected and carried on by cut-throats, with fire and sword in the van, and carnage, destruction and chaos in the wake. This is an injustice. Anarchy and nihilism may have given cause for such an impression, but they are as far apart from socialism as are the poles. Another mistake is that anarchy and nihilism are extreme forms of socialism. They are the extremes, but not the extreme forms. There can be no alliance of such contradictions, though we must confess that they are children of a common mother; but one is day, the other two are night.

A socialist is of necessity social—hence his name. He wishes to be social - that is, to live in a society formed of social beings like himself. And as a sequence he must conform to the laws, perhaps unwritten, of such society, whether it be family, community or State. All he wishes is to better such laws. An anarchist, on the contrary, recognizes none of these laws, advocates the abolishment of all laws, of every restraint. His is a scheme of pure individualism, which is impossible without perfect man, and even with perfect man all the power of co-operation and organization would be lost. His would be a golden age, such as Greek mythology depicts, but not an enlightened age of civilization, such as we would wish. His twin brother, the nihilist (trace the word), wishes nothing. But with man, imperfect as he is, their schemes would bring chaos.

Still, socialism is an all-embracing term. Communists, nationalists, collectivists, idealists, Utopians and Altruarians are all socialist; but it cannot be said that socialism is any one of these, for it is all. Any man is a socialist who strives for a better form of Government than the one he is living under.

Socialism means a reconstruction of society with a more just application of labor and distribution of the returns thereof. It cries out, "Every one according to his deeds!" Its logical foundation is economic; its moral foundation, "All men are born free and equal," and its ultimate aim is pure democracy.

By "all men are born free and equal" it means born free and with equal opportunities to earn by honest labor—mental or physical—a livelihood.

By a pure democracy is meant a form of government in which the supreme power rests with and is exercised directly by the people instead of the present form, which is a republican form of democracy, in which the supreme power rests with the people, but is indirectly exercised by them, through representatives.

Representatives may be corrupted, but how could the whole people be bribed? It would be a Herculean task, and as Lincoln said, "You may fool all of the people part of the time; part of the people all of the time; but not all the people all of the time."

Socialism is a phenomenon of this century. It is a vision of the future, while its agents are actively at work in the present. It is a product of social evolution. We have slavery, feudalism, capitalism and - socialism. It is the obvious step. Whether this generation will see it is uncertain, but "coming events cast their shadows before," and its shadow already darkens the world. It is a cloud rising above us with increasing magnitude. The dull rumble of its thunder can be heard; its lightning flashes brighter and brighter; it is upon us. Will it bring the cooling rain to the dry, parched earth, or will it bring the devastation of the hurricane? Think, friends, if you have not before. If you have, think again.