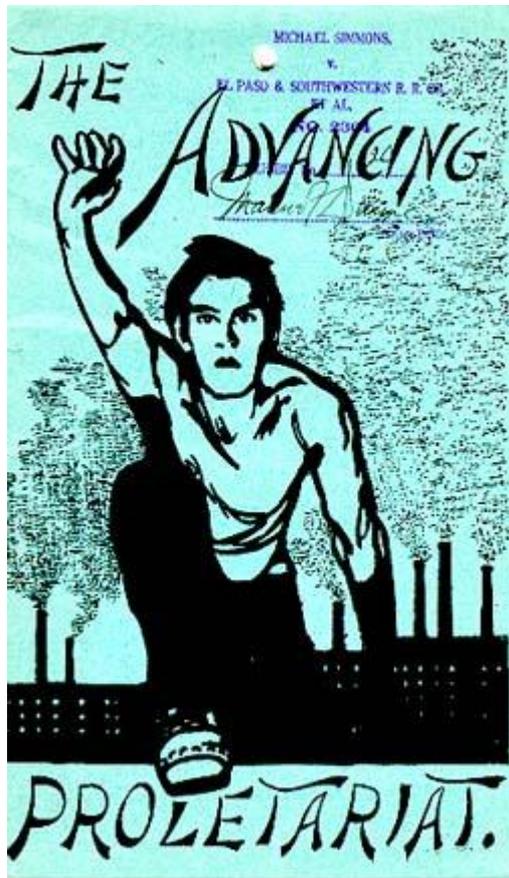


The advancing proletariat - Abner E. Woodruff



A pamphlet authored by Abner E. Woodruff and published by the IWW Publishing Bureau in 1917.

INTRODUCTORY

The object of any system of Philosophy is to furnish a rational explanation of the facts of the Universe from a knowledge of general principles that apply to the facts and existence within the Universe; therefore, it is the purpose of this pamphlet to clearly and simply trace the development of the Proletarian Psychology, and to indicate the Evolutionary character of Proletarian organization in the terms of Industry on the basis of the general principles of the modern Positive Scientific Philosophy.

I have to thank Mr. Austin Lewis and others for the thoughts here expressed, and can only hope that I have been able to accentuate a fact that must be carefully considered by both Socialists and Industrialists in discussing the Proletariat: namely, THE LAW OF ECONOMIC DETERMINISM. ABNER E. WOODRUFF, C. E.

The Law of Evolution

An examination of the facts of the orderly Universe leads with precision to an understanding of the laws of that Universe, and it may be said that these laws find their supreme expression in the Law of Evolution--the great immutable "law of change." This law may be stated as follows: ALL THINGS IN THE UNIVERSE TODAY ARE THE RESULTS OF THE ACTIONS OF THE FORCES OF THE UNIVERSE UPON THE MATTER OF THE UNIVERSE, APPLIED THROUGHOUT THE EONS OF TIME, PRODUCING INNUMERABLE CHANGES, WHICH HAVE FINALLY DEVELOPED HIGHER AND MORE PERMANENT FORMS OF LIFE OUT OF THOSE WHICH WERE LOWER AND LESS STABLE. The physical conditions which compelled changes in ANIMATED MATURE, and under which they occurred, are usually denominated "the environment"--the surrounding influences.

Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace are regarded as the co-discoverers of this great Law of Life. They not only observed the changes in the material Universe, but also the efforts of animated nature to place itself in harmony with the physical world by adjusting itself to these changes. These efforts at adjustment and re-adjustment are now termed "the struggle for existence"; for ANIMATED NATURE MUST CONFORM TO THE CONDITIONS OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD IN ORDER TO SURVIVE. Those forms of life which conform the most successfully are regarded as the most adaptable and, therefore, the best; from which we have the expression "the survival of the fittest" or "natural selection." In other words, Nature selected these forms as being the fittest to survive.

Man a Product of Evolution

From a study of plants and the lower forms of animals, it is but a step to the study of the highest form--Man; and, in a state of nature, we find man responding unconsciously to the law of Evolution: changing to correspond to his environment, and persisting in those forms which are in closest harmony with the requirements of nature. Of all creatures, man is probably the most complex, and this complexity was his most baffling problem until the statement of the law of evolution with its corollaries, "the struggle for existence" and "the survival of the fittest." Here was a basis on which to conduct the most rigid examination and, from the gathered facts, construct a definite, a positive philosophy. Anthropology became at once an intimate and particular branch of Biology. Man commenced to be studied from the viewpoint of his place in nature, and his differentiation from the other animals began to be ferreted out. Man picked himself to pieces, studied his own parts and decided on the laws of his being. From the facts, and by reasonable analogies, his history, from the day his arboreal ancestor swung down from the trees and walked upright on the ground, was constructed, and forms a record, so simple, so rational, so decisive, that few are now left to question it.

Man's physical structure is a result, traceable to definite and known causes, and the laws of his being are codified. His brain, with its powers of observation association, co-ordination and determination, is no longer a mysterious thing--the gift of an equally mysterious and baffling "first cause"--but a development of the spinal marrow, the culmination of an infinite series of changes and adjustments to environment taking place through the ages during which the Earth has been the seat of life. Man, in both body and brain, is therefore a creature of environment, evolved out of the Cosmos. The flower of the Cosmos, yet subject to the Cosmos, his particular differentiation from the other animals lies in the complexity and refinement of his nervous organization, and the consequent close co-ordination of his muscular and mental reactions. Yet, basically he is no different, for, even in his mental processes he is moulded and formed by the influences of the things around him.

The Mind-A Result

Joseph Dietzgen, in his Philosophical works, has demonstrated the fact that all of man's ideas come from the OUTSIDE--that no thought ever sprang spontaneous in the human brain. In other words--HUMAN THOUGHTS, HUMAN IDEAS, SPRING FROM HUMAN CONTACTS AND EXPERIENCES WITH THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE ABOUT US. Man's ability to think--his consciousness--the thing we call the 'Ego"--the mind--is a natural development through the orderly operation of the laws of the Universe, and, as such, it may be studied, analyzed and classified. The science of Psychology takes its place naturally as part of the larger and more extended sciences of Biology and Anthropology.

Here then is a basis for the study of the actions of men. Whim and caprice disappear, and the laws of cause and effect are seen operating in an orderly and rational sequence. The individual takes his place as a resultant of the experiences of his forebears and his own contacts with the world around him. His environment and the history of his race have made him what he is. Knowing the intimate history of any man, and with a given human situation, we may confidently predict what his actions will be.

The Common Mind

But man is a gregarious creature. He herds with his kind in social organizations, and his history is not complete without an examination of the relations which men sustain towards each other. Immediately our studies are shifted from the individual to the race. The sciences of Ethnography, Ethnology, Anthropography, Glossology, Technology, History, Archeology, Sociology and Economics are opened up to us. Through them all runs that wonderful law of human development- the Law of Evolution. Through them all we are continually brought round to the dictum of Dietzgen, that "human thoughts and ideas spring from human experiences."

SIMILAR EXPERIENCES BEGET SIMILAR IDEAS. The average of the experiences of a community, or a class, a nation, or a race begets the central idea of that community, or class, or nation, or race; therefore, in attempting to explain the tendency of any such community, class, nation, or race to gyrate about some central idea, or concertedly move towards some definite goal, we must discover those similarities of experience which furnish the common ground for similarity of thought and unity of action.

Economic Determinism

History furnishes us with many instances of great popular and class movements, but it was not until Marx enunciated the Law of Economic Determinism, that a rational basis for the interpretation of these events was secured. In his researches into history, he observed certain classes of men always standing together--always appearing upon the same side of the great historical arguments--and, upon a careful analysis, he promulgated this law, that THE THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS OF MEN ARE DETERMINED BY THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY OBTAIN THEIR LIVING. The same being only another way of stating the evolutionary truths, that man is a product of his environment; and that his thoughts and ideas are generated by his contacts and experiences with the world around him.

Materialist Conception of History

Carried over into the field of Historical Economics and applied to the Science of Sociology this law is translated into the Theory of the Materialist Conception of History which declares that ALL THE SOCIAL PHENOMENA IN ANY HISTORICAL EPOCH MAY BE EXPLAINED UPON THE BASIS OF THE METHOD OF WEALTH PRODUCTION AND EXCHANGE EXISTING AT THAT TIME. Immediately History ceases to be a mere record of the achievements of individuals. Instead, it becomes a moving panorama of the progress of the race as depicted in the struggles for supremacy of the various classes that have successively dominated society. Fundamental causes are seen at work, continuously and methodically shaping the trend of events. All the apparently disjointed and unrelated facts marshal themselves into orderly array, and take their places as guide boards along the high-road of history. The fall of Babylon, the Roman invasion of Gaul, even the Medieval Crusades, are reasonably and fully explained.

The pre-eminent fact of History, from the viewpoint of Economics and Sociology, is the institution of Private Property. Upon it Marx predicated the disestablishment of the Communal Tribes and the rise of the Nations, with the division of the people into classes in the terms of wealth and power--the separation of society into opposing camps--which carry on a continuous warfare among themselves. A warfare which he was pleased to call "the class struggle." And in each civilization we find a dominant class imposing its will upon the balance of society and maintaining the basic method of wealth production and distribution of that time. All the laws, the religion, the educational system or lack of educational system were designed to retain that class in its position of power and privilege. Internal peace depended upon the relative degrees of acquiescence in the general scheme manifested by the secondary and subject classes, and their ability to wrest concessions from the dominant class by a display of their organized strength.

Successive Ruling Classes

It is characteristic of all civilization based on Private Property and Class Privilege, that a secondary or subject class developed within each society and eventually displaced the dominant class. The new dominant class warped the old institutions to its own purposes, introduced a new method of production and exchange, imposed its will upon the balance of society and thereby established a new civilization. The Chattel Slave System of the Roman Patriciate gave way to Serf System of the Feudal Lords. Feudalism disappeared before Capitalism with its Wage Slave System of factory and machine production. The lesser Capitalism now moves aside for Plutocracy with its highly centralized form of Corporate Ownership and Industrial Control, and we seem about to enter upon a new era--the age of Industrial Feudalism.

The Chattel Slave, working with the simplest of hand tools, produced practically all the wealth of the Roman world. Upon his labor was built the power, luxury and culture of the privileged classes; and so essential was this kind of labor to the development of the civilization that we find the Romans waging wars of conquest for the special purposes of procuring it. Caesar's invasion of Gaul apparently had no other object than the capture of slaves for the Roman shops and fields.

The drying up of Western Asia forced the great migration of the Communal Tribes, and the tribesmen descending in hordes upon the Roman lands, brought with them institutions and customs that were totally repugnant to the Roman system. For several hundred years the struggle between them proceeded with varying degrees of fierceness, and finally ended in a

condition bordering on social and industrial chaos. Out of this catastrophe arose the Feudal System, which was a compromise--a partial amalgamation of Roman and Tribal customs and institutions. Its distinguishing feature was the translation of obligations owed to the nation or tribe into the obligations owed to persons, and rendered as a payment of rent for the use of land. The Roman slaves and coloni, and the Tribal freemen were held as serfs and were bound to the soil. Enforced labor upon the land or the shops attached to the castle of the Feudal Lord was the chief method wealth production--the serf producing a certain portion for his master that he might produce another portion for himself.

Two classes among the Romans were continued almost intact into Feudalism, and apparently were strong enough or necessary enough to preserve a great measure of their ancient rights and privileges. These were the classes of merchants and handicraftsmen known as the Guilds Merchant and Craft Guilds. They carried on a certain portion of production for use of their time, and conducted in a great measure the system of exchange then existing. As they grew stronger, they erected cities of their own for the purposes of defense manufacture and trade; and 57 of these cities, or "bourgs," known as the Hanseatic League, maintained a government which was sufficiently powerful to engage in war and dictate terms of peace to the loosely organized Feudal States and Nations round about them.

The introduction of the factory system of production into these cities, with the attendant subdivision of labor in the shop, broke up the craft guilds and introduced a new element into production--the factory owners, or manufacturers--and out of these and the merchant class were developed the Capitalists. Vigorous, resourceful and militant, these led the attack upon Feudalism and called to their banners all the oppressed and dissatisfied in the other classes. Prating of "human rights" and screaming for "freedom," they seized the ancient institutions and either destroyed them, or warped them to purposes of their own. Everything became converted into terms of cash. Money payments settled every human obligation. Even the agonies of injured honor might be assuaged in terms of gold.

The breaking up of the Feudal relations changed the method of land tenure. Many of the serfs became peasant proprietors, while others were transformed into mere farm laborers, or drifted into the factory towns. The handicraftsmen thronged the factories and under the new "divine" (?) right of contract, sold their labor-power at whatever price the Capitalists chose to pay for it. Property in the lands and tools of production still continued. The Wages System was, in essence, another form of servitude, and fiercely aggravated by the fact that the payment of the stipulated wage cancelled all the obligations between the man and his master. The freedom so loudly proclaimed was, for the workers merely a freedom to change from a bad master to a worse one, or at the worst to starve. Realization of PROFITS was the sole consideration for continuing production. When profits ceased, industry ceased, or the scale of wages went down until there was a sufficient margin of surplus value to induce the proprietor to again open the factory doors.

Slave, Serf and Laborer

The Chattel Slave and Feudal Serf were, economically, more secure than the Wage Earner. They were never denied the privilege of producing for use. The more they labored, the more powerful and luxurious their masters became. But the Wage Slave may be denied the right to produce. He may be excluded from the lands, tools and machinery of production; and the more productive he is, the more likely is this fate to overtake him: for now he produces to sell, and if production passes the purchasing power of society, production must cease until the

relative positions of the supply and demand may be naturally reversed and purchasing begin again. In fact it may even occur that the master class is forced to feed, clothe and shelter a portion of the workers in order to help reduce the surplus and tide over the workers to such time as production for sale can be profitably resumed.

Labor-power a Commodity

Free trade--free competition in buying and selling commodities--is the basic principle of the Capitalist system of exchange of private property, and it is but natural that the labor-power of the working class should also be regarded as a commodity. In fact it is inevitable that, under a system of production for PROFIT, labor-power should take on such a character and that it should be bought and sold in the open market according to the law of supply and demand of commodities. Nor is it surprising that in a competitive market, where the seller with the greatest necessity for cash fixes the market price, the price of labor-power should always tend to sink to the level of a bare subsistence for the workers; and that those workers with the ability to exist at the lowest standard of living should dictate the terms on which the others may also continue to exist. The whole tendency of the wage system has been to drag all the workers down to the same dead level of poverty. The fact that a certain portion of them still manage to maintain a comparatively decent standard of living is due to certain conditions which Capitalism has not as yet been able to overcome, and not to any intelligently applied powers of resistance inherent in that portion of the working class.

The Skilled Workman

Up to recent times the specialized skill of the craftsman protected him in a large measure against material reductions in his standard of living and, as he regarded his skill as a PROPERTY, he naturally accepted the capitalist property notions and attempted to apply them to the crafts. His Craft was his capital--the means of his life--and any raise in its position benefited him. Anything that threatened the existence of his skill, or his exclusive possession of that skill, threatened him. Therefore he joined his fellows in the organization of Craft Unions for the purpose of preserving the crafts and maintaining the standard of living of the Craftsmen. He had a property--a commodity--to be bought and sold in the market, and through his union, he felt himself able to control the supply of that commodity and thereby affect the market to his own advantage. He resisted the encroachment of the machine upon the hand tool; he sought to limit the numbers of those possessing skills and he endeavored to set a slow standard of production among the craftsmen. Contracts, closed shops, limited apprenticeships, high initiation fees and dues, and onerous conditions of membership were a natural result of his property ideas--the supply of his commodity must be limited, in order to boost the price. Working with tools that moved only as he applied his own skill and strength to them, and turning out a product that could be identified as the result of the labor of an individual, he thought strictly in individual terms. His craft was supreme, because all-necessary to his individual existence, and so extreme was this individual viewpoint that it was only when jurisdictional quarrels between the related crafts had become unbearable, that a federation of the craft unions was possible.

The craftsman had nothing to do with the unskilled. He looked upon them as inferior beings, and though their condition might sink to the lowest, he was not sufficiently interested in them to feel either sympathy or regret--they must look out for themselves as he did for himself. "It is the misfortune of the craftsman, that, having been compelled to operate in terms of property, the great HUMAN MOVEMENT has been lost upon him." His dread has always

been that he might become "as one of these," for no matter how great his skill, or how close-knit his brotherhood, capitalism, through machine production, continually threatened the security of his position. Any economic system built upon the RIGHTS OF PROPERTY is a confiscatory system, and little property disappears before big property. The property of the craftsman--his skill--tends to evaporate. A new mechanical device, a newly discovered chemical process, or a new combination of industrial forces may scatter that skill among the insensate machines, or absolutely displace it. "The whole tendency of skill is away from the individual and in the direction of the group" where, through the agency of the machine, it translates itself into mere quickness of action coupled with a mild form of manual dexterity.

Stripped of his PROPERTY the "aristocrat of labor" sinks to the level of the common herd. The machine process of production racks the structure of Craft Unionism. Built upon the basis of a transitory property, it cannot withstand the aggressions of the vastly superior property of the Industrial Plutocracy. However, the craft union notion, like many others, dies hard, and we see the surviving craftsmen attempting to fortify themselves by organizing the machine operatives in the terms of the crafts. Such organizations cannot be permanent for THE PROPERTY IDEA IS UNTENABLE AMONG MACHINE WORKERS. The very soul of private property is its accompanying right of EXCLUSION; and exclusion cannot be practiced at the machine--any one can function there. A few weeks of experience makes a machine operator of the common laborer, and furthermore, SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT AND THE SPEEDING UP PROCESSES DESTROY INDIVIDUALITY. The loss of individuality destroys all notions of property--cuts the last thread that binds the interests of the worker to the present system.

Craft unionism cannot survive. The development of industry--the perfection of the machine processes--has doomed it. To the machine operative, it is an anachronism--a thing out of date.

The ancient slave and serf classes were not essentially revolutionary, and if they had been their ignorance and isolation was sufficient to prevent any concerted action. Mere physical revolution against an irksome environment cannot be called a revolutionary spirit, and while the slaves and serfs indulged in rebellions, they were usually planless and contained no germ of a constructive nature. At the most some measure of participation in the benefits of the existing system was all they sought. There was no idea of the establishment of a new order of society, which should promote a greater diffusion of culture, and thereby create a better and nobler race. Success upon their part would have meant only social chaos and a recession in the scale of civilization.

Let us now examine the modern laborers and machine operatives in this connection and endeavor to arrive at an understanding of their characteristic psychology, as derived from the common experience of their class.

The Proletariat

Unskilled laborer and non-specialized machine operatives are now usually denominated "Proletarians," and by "the proletariat" we mean A CLASS OF LABORERS, POSSESSING NEITHER PROPERTY NOR SPECIALIZED SKILL, WHO SELL THEIR LABOR-POWER IN THE OPEN MARKET TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER, AND ARE ABLE TO SELL THAT POWER ONLY SO LONG AS IT WILL PRODUCE A PROFIT FOR THE PURCHASER. The Proletariat is the subject class in modern society--the special human product of the capitalist system--and to obtain its view of life, we must know how it obtains

its living, for, as we have seen by the law of Economic Determinism, "the thoughts and actions of men are determined by the manner in which they make their living;" and "the common experience of a class creates the characteristic mental attitude of that class towards the world in which it lives."

Under the Guild system, the Journeyman worked in the small shop and, so long as he was unmarried, usually lived in the house of his master as a member of the family. All the different parts of the process of manufacture were usually carried on in the same place; as for instance, the shoemaker was a tanner also. The completed product was the handiwork of one man--an individual production--and as such, the workman might well take a large measure of pride in this evidence of his patience, industry and skill. But the capitalists introduced the factory system of production, and the journeyman, though still working with hand tools, did only a portion of the labor on an article and passed it on to another to do another portion. The completed product was the handiwork of a number of men--a group production--and as such, the workman took pride in it only to the extent that he could trace his own labor in the completed article. Otherwise, it was a matter of indifference to him whether it was well or poorly made. His interest in the whole thing ceased when he received his stipulated wage.

The development of the steam engine stimulated invention and, within the last 100 years, machinery has so vastly supplanted hand labor, that the average proletarian attending the machine turns out a product about twenty times greater than the product of the old time journeyman. Yet, with all these great modern aids to his productivity, the average proletarian finds himself in a state of chronic poverty many removes below the journeyman. The small factory of the early capitalist has become the great industrial plant of a group of Plutocrats, and the small group of fairly skilled mechanics has become a veritable army of industry, Where formerly the individual touch might be seen upon an article, now the raw material passes in at one end of the machine and the finished product pours out at the other. Everything is thoroughly standardized and no man can say, "I did this--I did that." The individual effort is completely swallowed up--obliterated in the process of production. The workers themselves are grouped according to their peculiar mental or physical characteristics and guided in their tasks by "scientific" bosses, who prescribe by a fixed rule even the motions of their limbs and bodies. During the hours of their labor, they are no longer thinking men, but mere automatons, performing their functions mechanically and completely dominated by the will of another. BY GROUP EFFORT OR SCIENTIFIC TEAM WORK ABOUT THE MACHINES, THE PROLETARIAT EARNS ITS BREAD.

The Proletarians necessarily touch the world at the point of production--their very lives depend upon gaining access to the machinery and processes of production--hence they think in terms of industry. Grouped about the machines they soon come to realize that the bulk of their product goes to the owners of the machines. Any increase in productive capacity does not redound to their advantage; but merely means the displacement of a portion of their number from industry and a consequent effort on the part of those so displaced to return to the machines on any terms that will prevent starvation. The workers yet employed view this event with alarm because they find themselves threatened from two directions; on the one hand, by a possible further improvement of the machines with the subsequent displacement of yet another portion of their numbers; and, on the other hand, by the displacement of themselves through the return to industry of those previously displaced, whose stomachs have compelled them to agree to yield up a greater portion of the product of toil for the PRIVILEGE OF WORKING. They see a vicious spiral of displacements, on which the wage

scale constantly descends and, down which they are plunged to ever greater physical exertions, to ever increasing privations, to ever more revolting degradations.

The war amongst the capitalists themselves thrusts large numbers of the defeated into the ranks of the proletariat; the invention of new processes and in machines deprives whole sections of the craftsmen of their skill; standardization and improved methods of accountancy and management dump numerous intellectual workers into the limbo of the unskilled. All of which means a corresponding increase in the numbers of the absolutely dislocated--the "army of the unemployed." Machine production, the great leveling influence of the age, looms fierce and gaunt. It is master and decides all things for all men.

Property--either material, or in the form of a specialized skill--has ceased to exist for the Proletarian; access to the machine is the sole basis of his life: and following the loss of the property idea comes a complete revolution in the mental attitude of the worker. MAN becomes the dominant factor and all his problems are again translated in terms of Human Rights. He denies the right of the machine or the owner of the machine to longer hold him in subjection. He seeks a way to seize the means whereby he lives and turn it to his own use and purposes. He thinks in the terms of a class, for he now realizes his class position and knows that only as such can he hope to survive. He finds that he must attack the structure of a society based on private property and his point of attack is at the point of production, the point where he daily meets his enemy. His whole attitude is one of opposition--opposition to the property of the master class--an attitude utterly subversive of all modern ethics, morals, religions and laws, an utterly Revolutionary attitude.

"THE PROLETARIAN IS A REVOLUTIONIST BECAUSE HE IS A PROLETARIAN" and, in order to secure unity and efficiency, he organizes at the machine, the only place where he appreciably functions in the scheme of modern life.

The Proletariat and Politics

Any force in society that lacks a constructive program is useless--a futile force. If it merely defends a set position and does not keep pace with the progress of the age by means of a positive policy of its own, it cannot function for the proletariat; for the proletariat is fundamentally revolutionary; therefore aggressively progressive. An alien class in modern society, it finds itself unable to function agreeably, even tolerably, in conjunction with any other class. Its whole attitude is one of uncompromising antagonism. With the loss of the property idea it also lost the idea of "contract," which is an inseparable feature of the craft unionist property foundation. Clearly then, the craft union, with its circumscribed property and contractual notions, its acceptance of capitalist proprietorship[sic], its lack of a constructive policy, cannot function for the proletariat.

Political parties, with their methods of nose counting, are not acceptable to the proletariat; not only because the economically powerful are prone to disregard the noses of slaves, but because the methods of the ballot box are too much the methods of the mob; and THE PROLETARIAT REALIZES THAT ITS FORCES MUST BE MARSHALED, DRILLED AND DISCIPLINED FOR THE DUTIES OF PRODUCTION AND INDUSTRIAL ADMINISTRATION. It realizes that the modern "government" is but a shadow and not a substance--that it is merely a committee acting for the economically powerful--and that it will dissolve of its own motion whenever its economic support is withdrawn. Representation in

such a government has no value to the proletariat, since it does not care to trade or traffic with the other classes, for whom it possesses only hatred and contempt.

Furthermore, THE POLITICAL PARTY IS MERELY AN ARTIFICIAL GROUPING OF PEOPLE OF ALL CLASSES, UNITED BY A TEMPORARY AGREEMENT OF OPINION--fickle, uncertain, undisciplined, irresponsible, catering to votes and evaporating its sympathy whenever its popularity is threatened; while THE CLASS IS AN ORGANIC DIVISION OF THE PEOPLE, COMPOSED OF THOSE SUBJECTED TO THE SAME ECONOMIC INFLUENCES, THOSE WHO LIVE AND WORK ON THE SAME PLANE OF MATERIAL INTEREST--therefore, constant, stable, harmonious, and capable of discipline and responsibility. These facts appeal with irresistible force to the proletariat, which finds itself in the midst of a continuous and cumulative economic warfare, requiring the constant and harmonious efforts of all its units. Back of the political skirmishers lies a vast economic army and it can only be opposed with organized economic power. Organization on the field of production is therefore the proletariat's means of expression--there is where it functions--there is where it daily meets its enemy.

That Apocalyptic vision of a future condition known as the Socialist State, or Co-operative Commonwealth, is rather too vague a notion to convey much to the minds of the proletarians, who, living at the base of modern society and functioning at the machinery of production deal constantly with the CONCRETE. They have neither time nor inclination for speculation, and the usual cry of the Socialist Politician "Vote the Co-operative Commonwealth into existence at the polls" lacks practicality, so far as they can see, because they, who need that commonwealth, are in a sad minority at the polls through lack of the electoral qualifications; and it is quite unbelievable that the privileged classes would abate one jot or tittle the power and privilege they now enjoy. The retention of the territorial "State" in the Socialist scheme of social regeneration marks it as a middle class conception, quite in keeping with middle class experience and psychology, and, therefore, largely out of harmony with any conception the proletariat may evolve from its own experience. The representative character of the territorial State does very well for a class engaged in trade and which has heretofore used the state as a medium for adjusting trade frictions, but to a class functioning directly in production and at the mechanical end of distribution, such a State is utterly out of date and useless. The Proletariat proposes the Industrial Democracy--a society based primarily upon production--equality in production coupled with equality in distribution--each necessary industry the equal of every other necessary industry--and it is quite evident that territorial representatives cannot legislate intelligently for the industries. Bureaucratic administration would necessarily result in the Socialist "State"--democratic participation and control by the people would be set aside--a new slavery would ensue, for bureaucrats are inherently despotic. Further--the State, (the primary function of which has always been to protect private property) as an entity set over and above the people, has so long represented the proletarian idea of despotism that any scheme retaining it must surely meet with proletarian opposition.

The machine dominates the lives of the proletariat, therefore the proletarian conception is that, in a society based on universal participation in industry and the benefits of industry, the machine must beneficially influence the lives of all men. Indeed, the major portion of the questions arising in such a society would be automatically settled by the machines, and, among a people living on the same plane of material interest and subjected to the same economic influences, there must arise such a similarity of psychology, such a singleness of viewpoint and unity of purpose, that the moral and religious lives of the people would all rise to the same high and noble standard. In fact, administration in such a society would most

probably resolve itself into the collection, classification and dissemination of industrial statistics, and the enforcement of the moral code would be a function of the Industry of Public Health and Sanitation.

Two facts stand out prominently in an examination of modern society; 1st, THE PROLETARIAT IS THE SUBJECT CLASS, and 2nd THE SPECIAL FUNCTION OF THE STATE IS TO KEEP THE PROLETARIAT IN SUBJECTION. Therefore, any organization of the proletariat as a class must at once be considered a menace to the privileged classes and be declared illegal. All the activities of the proletariat furthering its program for a new society must necessarily be revolutionary and be beyond the "Law." Therefore, the Socialist Politician's "legal revolution" idea is regarded as absurd, by the proletariat; and since the proletariat realizes that all its forces must be closely coordinated and drilled in production and co-operation in order to function in the new society, the idea that the whole economic struction[sic] of this present society can be changed by going to the polls once every two or four years is especially absurd.

The proletariat makes no appeal to any but the wage working class, though it realizes that the growth of the Social Consciousness among all classes must bring thousands to its standard, whose immediate personal interests would be conserved by an opposite course. It realizes how great a task it is to persuade men against their material interests, and how small the chance is to secure a majority at the polls--a majority, helpless in its strength because undisciplined in co-operation and composed of potentially discordant elements. But more it realizes that the proletariat, operating the machinery of production and really in possession of the wealth of the world, is in a position to dictate the terms of life to all society, if it merely secures the consent and co-operation of the members of its own class. It proposes that the ballot box shall repose first in the Union hall, and then in the shop; and one needs only to function in industry to be a voter there. The recently landed immigrant, who has a "job," is equal to the descendant of the Pilgrim Fathers, who also works for bread.

The future society comes only at the desire and with the consent of the proletariat, for it is evidently the only class able to safeguard humanity by means of a new society; and the revolution can properly occur, only after the proletariat has had sufficient training in voluntary co-operation and self-government to be able to demonstrate its ability to successfully continue production and handle distribution so that all may be fed. Voting EN MASSE at the polls is no evidence whatsoever of such ability, and to teach this class that its way to freedom lies primarily through the ballot box is a most miserable miseducation and paves the way to the most desperate catastrophe that humanity could ever suffer.

The Socialist Philosophy bases itself upon the proletariat. The needs and aspirations of the proletariat are the justification of the Social revolution. So, why attempt to lead this class in a way it cannot go? Why forget the fundamental fact of proletarian life--the law of Economic Determinism? The method of getting the proletariat's living determines its thoughts and actions. Machine production--group effort--scientific team work--class experience--these are the determining factors, and all the fine-spun theories go glimmering when confronted with these. Middle class meddling and interference with the proletariat--giving it a program tainted with middle class traditions--is an impertinence that is excusable only on the grounds of misguided but philanthropic zeal.

In a class society, the powers of the government are derived from the economic power of the dominant class, and, for that reason, the prime necessity of the proletariat, in its struggle, is to

develop its economic power, for it is really opposed only by economic power. Organization on the economic field, at the point of production, and contending for the product of the machines is the only method of developing economic power for the proletariat; and participation in purely political propaganda and campaigns is a criminal waste of time and energy. In the field of politics, the program of the proletariat should be "PRESSURE RATHER THAN PARTICIPATION;" a program heretofore ably pursued by the Plutocrats.

The proletariat cannot conceive of an acceptable society without machine production. It cannot conceive of men producing efficiently except in groups around machines. Consequently its form of organization to carry on the class struggle and build the society of the future must preserve the unity of the groups now working about the machines. Any other method would be foreign to it and doomed to failure because inconsistent with proletarian experience.

No class ever yet successfully dominated society unless it demonstrated its ability to direct industry. Only on this basis could a following be secured and power be established. The proletariat is in no different case. It MUST demonstrate its efficiency. To merely destroy modern society without substituting something better would be the most monstrous of crimes. To achieve emancipation only to plunge the world into economic chaos would be the bitterest of travesties upon human intelligence. The proletariat must recognize and be prepared to assume the responsibilities of production and distribution, and of social and industrial administration; otherwise, it had better submit and accept such ameliorations as a Benevolent Feudalism may be willing to accord to it. It must have a positive scientific philosophy, a definite conception of the future society, and a practicable program. Lacking these, it fails.

Modern science, based upon the law of evolution, now furnishes a Philosophy of Life, positive and definite in its character and acceptable to the proletariat, because it offers a connected and rational explanation of the phenomena of the Universe. The proletarian conception of the Industrial Democracy, harmonizing man with the method of wealth production and distribution, finally harmonizes him with his environment and therefore, through universal well being, guarantees the generation of a highly cultured race, which from its viewpoint, is the purpose of human life upon this planet. The program of the proletariat is necessarily dependent upon the industrial system and upon the degree of its own intelligence. Its watchwords are "Agitate--Educate--Organize," and, as organization is fundamentally necessary to unity of action and the working out of a program, we will now consider that phase of the question.

Proletarian Organization

Marx declares that the Historic Mission of the working class is to overthrow capitalism and establish a new order of society, therefore, the method of its organization is of the first importance. We have seen that TO FUNCTION AT THE MACHINES IS THE BASIS OF THE PROLETARIAN RELATIONS TO MODERN SOCIETY, and it must now be borne in upon our minds that, THE BASIS OF PROLETARIAN RELATIONS TO THE FUTURE SOCIETY WILL BE FUNCTIONING AT THE MACHINES. The future society will produce and distribute its living by machinery just as we do now, except that the machinery will be greatly improved, therefore it is a perfectly natural and a highly necessary step for the Proletariat to organize at the machines and in the terms of modern industry. The handicraftsmen--users of hand tools--organized in the terms of those tools as craftsmen; the

proletarians--groups of non-specialized workers around the machines--now organize in the terms of the machines as Industrialists.

Syndicalism in Europe and Industrialism in America were evolved out of the struggles and defeats of the rebellious working class and have many things in common. Both hold the needs and aspirations of the proletariat as the basis of their organizations. Both declare 'Labor alone is fruitful' and "to the worker belongs the full social value of his toil." Both propose the abolition of the wages system and the conversion of PRIVATE property into universal SOCIAL possession. Both demand that all normal adult persons shall function in industry, so that the same may be Democratically managed and controlled, and all men have that reasonable leisure and education which makes for a truly cultured race. Both have a vision of the future civilization, and the organization of their Syndicate and Unions have three cardinal purposes which are identical; namely,

- (1) To resist the master class;
- (2) To build the new society; and
- (3) To function as units of production, distribution and administration in the new society.

The Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World (the American organization) says: "It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with Capitalism. The arm of production must be organized, not only for the every day struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when Capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the new society within the shell of the old."

From my notes on an address by Leon Jouhaux, Secretary of the Confederation General du Travail (France) I quote the following:

"Aims of C. G. T.

Section I. Grouping of wages workers for the defense of their moral and material interests, both economic and professional.

Section 2. Outside every political school it organizes every worker, who is conscious of the struggle, for the abolition of the wages system and the employing class."

**** "It proposes to become the local administrator and regulator of production in the new society."

**** "Syndicalism must be self-sufficient in the task it has laid down for itself, therefore it develops class consciousness. It develops and strengthens the working class through the everyday struggles. It promotes class education towards the expropriation of the employers."

**** "Economic transformation only is sought, therefore the ability of the workers for production and self government must be developed."

**** "The C. G. T. forms the new society within the shell of the old."

You will observe that both these official utterances are practically the same in the expression of PURPOSE, and that they show a complete realization and acceptance of the duties and responsibilities imposed upon the working class by their revolutionary programs. But, at this point, the two organizations diverge, fundamental differences of conception and tactics

distinguish them to such an extent, that it is a grave error to say that the two are really identical. The recent-formation of the Syndicalist League of North America has accentuated this difference in the United States and there is no longer any reason why any inquiring person should fail to distinguish between them. The anarchistic element are[*sic*] strong and active in the C. G. T., and have developed their DEFENSIVE TACTICS to a remarkable degree; while the Socialistic element hold the balance of power in the American Industrial Unions and have devoted themselves very largely to questions and problems of STRUCTURE; so that the conception of the future society seems to be much clearer and more rational in this country than in Europe. The French AUTONOMOUS local, unassisted and unrestrained, does not appeal to the American with his ideas of CENTRALIZED authority and responsibility. Furthermore the American idea of efficiency necessitates a system that can use and practice the most scientific economy in the administration of affairs, and such economy is not promoted by the use of an autonomous system.

However, it is not the purpose of this pamphlet to enter into a discussion of the relative merits and demerits of Syndicalism and Industrial Unionism, but rather to point out the structure of the One Big Union, without reference to the other. For that purpose then, let us proceed.

Industrial Unionism

So long as industry was, relatively, in an undeveloped state and great areas of land were available for settlement, the craft unions met the requirements of the organized portion of the working class; but, when the development of inventions brought on the "machine age" and the desirable lands were occupied, craft unionism ceased to function advantageously. It had developed at a time when the man and his master worked together on the job, as is the case now on the ordinary small farm, and there was a belief that the employer and employee had interests in common. The workman had visions of a time when he should set up in business for himself, and become the employer of a man or two; and it was quite natural that he should adopt the motto "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work"--the only question being--What is fair? The right to privately own property was not questioned; in fact, skill in the crafts was regarded as a property and the workman imagined that he met his employer on the plane of equality. For this reason he readily entered into contracts for the sale of his services--he being a free man and competent to make conditions for himself. The tools of his trade were fitted to his hands and moved only so far and so fast as he propelled them, and, the article when finished was a monument to himself; all of which tended to exalt him in his own estimation. He looked down upon the unskilled as distinctly inferior beings, unfit and undesirable. Foreigners, negroes and Chinese were beasts to be especially abhorred; women were desirable only as satellites to men; and children would grow up and help to make him rich when they were able to go to work.

The Union was a defensive weapon only. It organized the strength of those who gained their bread by the use of the same kind of tools. It opposed the introduction and development of machinery, and retarded the spread of technical knowledge by limiting apprentices. It entered into closed shop agreements with employers, and limited the number of operating crafts men by excessive initiation fees and dues. and by refusing to recognize cards issued by unions in other or distant places. It regarded itself as a distinct entity in the world of labor, and held aloof from association with other craft unions. In case of a strike or lockout affecting some one craft, the other craftsmen regarded it with indifference, for they were bound by a CONTRACT which prevented interference on their part, if for any reason they had cared to do so. Notice of intention to strike was always given ahead of time; great war, or strike

benefit funds were provided; and every effort was made to keep the strike within the bounds of legality.

Jurisdictional quarrels finally forced the formation of the Federation of Labor in order to have a means of preserving the peace; and through this Federation the craftsmen have maintained lobbies at the State and National Capitals to advocate and promote the enactment of "more and better laws for labor."

Despite the organized opposition of the crafts, machinery began more and more to dominate industry; destroying whole crafts as the Glass Bottle Blowers, and bringing others into existence, as the Electricians; but always the tendency has been to sub-divide labor and scatter the skill of the craftsmen into the hands of a number of men working around machines. The despised foreigners, and finally women and children, have, in a large measure, taken the places of the ancient craftsmen through the simplification of industry by the use of the machine instead of the hand tool.

The New Working Class--the Machine Proletariat--differs essentially from the Craftsmen. The machine having scattered skill and converted its remnants into mere rapidity of motion and mild manual dexterity, the idea of an exclusive property in skill has disappeared and along with it has gone the contractual notion, the aristocracy of labor idea, pride in production, contempt for foreigners, and intolerance of women and children in industry. The new unionism, organizing on the basis of the machine, welcomes every improvement and development in industry, excludes no worker from the machines on any grounds of undesirability (there being no barriers of race, creed, color, sex, age or skill), makes no closed shop agreements or binding time contracts of employment, depresses its initiation fees and dues to a bare expense basis, and issues universal transfer cards which are acceptable in all industries and in all civilized countries of the world. The Industrial Unions group all the workers in a given industrial plant in one industrial union without reference to any other consideration than this, that they take part in the production of the plant's output. Laborers, craftsmen, office force and salesmen--all are eligible, because all are necessary to efficient production. No one is so great or so humble that he should be excluded. No one is of finer clay than another--all function in industry, therefore all are equal. All work in the same plant; all draw their pay from the same window; the labor of all is wrapped up in the same product; therefore all should be in the same union.

The interests of the proletarians are mutual because they as a class are subject to the same economic influences, therefore "an injury to one is the concern of all." A strike means that every worker shall walk out and stay out until an agreement has been reached whereby all may return.

The method of organization is a process of centralization and is effected in the following manner (in the Department of Mining for instance): all workers employed about a mine, whether under or above ground, all employees in the stamp mills, roasters, cyaniding plant, or smelter; all woodsmen employed by the mine to produce timbers, lumber or wood for its use; all workers employed on a railroad owned by the mine and used to transport its output and supplies, would be members of the Industrial Union of Metal Miners. The various craftsmen (engine drivers, firemen, carpenters, blacksmiths, cyaniders, amalgamators, etc.) would all be MINERS along with the drill-runners, hammersmen, timbermen, "trammers and muckers.

Metal Miners are grouped in the Industrial Union of Metal Mine Workers. Coal miners in the Industrial Union of Coal Mine Workers, and oil field workers in the Industrial Union of Oil Workers.

All these Industrial Unions are united in the Industrial Department of Mining.

The Department of Mining is then united with the Departments of Agriculture and Fisheries, General Production and Distribution, Construction, Transportation, and Public Service, in the general organization of The Industrial Workers of the World, which, in its turn, is affiliated with other similar organizations in the other civilized countries.

By this means all the workers are brought together upon the basis of their group relations to modern industry. It is a class organization, and, as such, coordinates the forces of the proletariat to the end that it may consciously develop its inherent powers and proceed, through education, discipline and pressure, to the consummation of its manifest high destiny.

A fundamental advantage of the Industrial method of organization is the fact that such organization allows the use of those tactics which are peculiarly and characteristically proletarian and permits it to go directly towards the object of proletarian attack. All shields and subterfuges are thrown aside--the proletariat resists in its own proper person and wages the class war openly upon the economic field, the only place where exploitation occurs.

The dual slogan of the proletariat, "an injury to one is an injury to all" and "workingmen of all countries--unite," means something when uttered by an Industrial organization. United upon the economic field and without holy contracts, one portion of the workers cannot be used to defeat another portion when the struggle becomes acute. Ease of initiation and reasonable dues are an inducement to all workers to join--no worker should ever be an industrial outcast. The free and close association of all the workers; their discussion and co-operation for mutual economic and social purposes tend to break down the ancient craft, national and race antagonisms. The universal free transfer card enables the ready adjustment of labor to industrial conditions, and contributes in the highest degree to perfecting the fluidity of the working class. Furthermore, among the students of the class struggle, the opinion is coming more and more to be held that the culmination of the struggle will be the Social General Strike, or at least, a threat of the same, and the industrial method seems to be the only one that can properly marshal, drill and discipline the workers for that event.

The mutual economic interests, the daily association, the common experiences of the social conflict must surely develop that SOLIDARITY, without which the proletariat may struggle in vain, but with which it must inevitably assert its supremacy. Organized at first upon the outside, it must eventually move the union meeting place into the shop, and function there producing and distributing the living of the world.

Like the bird in the egg, the physical portion of the Industrial Democracy already exists within the framework of modern society. The lands, the tools and the machinery of production and distribution are well nigh perfect, and a working population, trained in the processes of industry, functions at the machines. The quickening of this mass into life is the next necessary step. An awakened Social Conscience, a realization of power and a desire for true economic freedom must-bring about the great change.

Earthwide in the scope of its activities, Industrial Unionism points to a new civilization where the forces of production and distribution will be nicely adjusted and co-ordinated--where those who labor will enjoy--where childhood will be free--where manhood will be secure--where age will rest in peace--where man, the flower of the Earth, shall be in harmony with the world about him.

Taken from [The Bisbee Deportation of 1917: A University of Arizona Web Exhibit](#)