

The

Science of

Socialism

A home study course

Price \$1.25

"The Science of Socialism" is a carefully planned study course from which the serious student can obtain a basic understanding of the principles of scientific Socialism and the program for establishing a Socialist society. The course is a comprehensive unit in itself. However, to derive maximum benefit from it, the student should commit himself to fulfill the supplementary reading assignments each week, and to answer the self-testing questions posed at the end of each lesson.

The supplementary reading assignments are given in the following works—all published at low prices by the New York Labor News, publishing department of the Socialist Labor Party. The works are listed in the order in which they are referred to in the study course. These can be purchased at the special price listed on the enclosed order form, if ordered at one time.

What Means This Strike? by Daniel De Leon
Two Pages From Roman History, by Daniel De Leon
Unionism: Fraudulent or Genuine? by Nathan Karp
Reform or Revolution, by Daniel De Leon
From Reform to Bayonets, by Arnold Petersen
Bourgeois Socialism, by Arnold Petersen
The Communist Manifesto, by Karl Marx & Frederick Engels
Crises in European History, by Gustav Bang
Socialism From Utopia to Science, by Frederick Engels
From Tribal Councils to Industrial Union Administration,
a series of charts by Walter Steinhilber with accom-
panying text by Aaron M. Orange
Burning Question of Trades Unionism, by Daniel De Leon
Socialist Reconstruction of Society, by Daniel De Leon
Socialist Industrial Unionism, by Eric Hass
Capitalism vs. Socialism, debate between Daniel De Leon
and William H. Berry
High Cost of Living, by Arnold Petersen
Value, Price and Profit, by Karl Marx
Wage-Labor and Capital, by Karl Marx
Capital and Labor, by Arnold Petersen
The Truth About Inflation, by Arnold Petersen
Marxism vs. Soviet Despotism, by Arnold Petersen

Donna Bills, Dec. 1971

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Lecture rooms on mineralogy, on astronomy, on the differential calculus, on law, on electricity, on anatomy, on all of these and similar subjects, are not liable to become centers from which mental corruption radiates. True, there may be, as there often is, corruption in the appointment of the professors in these, as in all other, branches—but the corruption ends there. The reason is obvious. There is no motive for misdirecting instruction. There may be lack of up-to-dateness; there may be even ignorance; a set purpose to corrupt and mislead is not likely.

It is otherwise with regard to the social sciences. Some indirectly, most of them directly, bear upon the class struggle. Indeed, it would go hard to pick out one branch of the social sciences that is not begotten of the palpitations of the class struggle. Where the class struggle palpitates, material interests are at stake. It is an established principle that the material interests of a ruling class, in part, promote immorality. To promote incapacity to reason upon the domain of sociology is one of the corrupt practices of ruling class material interests.

—Daniel De Leon

“Marxian Science and the Colleges.”

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Socialism, with the light it casts around and within man, alone can cope with these problems. Like the sea that takes up in its bosom and dissolves the innumerable elements poured into it from innumerable rivers, to Socialism is the task reserved of solving one and all the problems that have come floating down the streams of time, and that have kept man in internecine strife with man.

—Daniel De Leon

INTRODUCTION

The Socialist Labor Party of America was founded on its present Marxist basis in 1890. For 13 years prior to 1890, or since 1877, there had been a Socialist Labor Party, an organization that was dominated by German-speaking Socialists, who had fled from Germany when Socialist activity was outlawed there by Bismarck's anti-Socialist decrees. Most of the Socialist Labor Party's agitation was conducted in the German language and was aimed at German immigrants. Then, in 1890, drastic changes were made in the Party's principles and policies. The "ic" was dropped from the name and the entire organization revamped as an *American* Socialist party that conducted its agitation mainly in the English language and that aimed at winning the hearts and minds of American workers of all races and national origins. At the same time, the un-Marxist and nativistic tendencies of the *Alte Genossen* (old German comrades) were repudiated. The principles and implications of the class struggle as spelled out by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, the co-founders of scientific Socialism, were firmly embodied in the SLP constitution as the unfailing guide in all tactical and policy decisions.

The Socialist Labor Party is unique. With Abraham Lincoln it believes that "important principles may and must be inflexible," and that "compromises of principles break of their own weight." Its policy from the outset was to enlighten workers on Socialist principles before organizing them. "Do not, on your life, organize first and educate afterwards," De Leon¹ warned, "educate first and organize afterwards." Under this policy, each new applicant for membership in the Party would know what he was coming into. And the Party — the collective membership — would know that in each new member it had a man or woman who joined, not in a moment of emotional enthusiasm, but as a result of study, reflection and conviction.

In its education the SLP has always laid great

¹ Daniel DeLeon (1854-1914) was the founder of the present-day Socialist Labor Party, the discoverer of the Socialist Industrial Union program, and the greatest of modern Socialists. In giving him the latter title, Lenin said that De Leon was the only Socialist who had added anything to Socialism since Marx.

stress on understanding *basic* principles and the *theory* of scientific Socialism. Theory is vital. In discussing its importance for the Socialist movement, De Leon wrote:

"Rather," says Auguste Comte, "a wrong theory, than no theory at all." A theory, be its "abstract doctrine" ever so defective, still is instinct with the virtue of imparting direction to the "work done," and practical experience may then react upon the propelling "abstract doctrine" itself and correct its possible defects; on the contrary, "work done" undirected by any "abstract doctrine" whatever will fruitlessly expend its energies in the wilderness. ["Marxian Science and the Colleges."]

This course, therefore, will emphasize the theory and basic principles of scientific Socialism.

The capitalist woods are full of self-styled "leftists" who sneer at the SLP. Generally, they ignore the SLP, but if they can't avoid it—as, for example, when they are asked questions about it—they answer with a standard stock of clichés, the most frequent of which are charges that the SLP is "dogmatic," "doctrinaire" and "sectarian." These "leftists" may call themselves "Marxists," but they stoutly refuse to be "strait-jacketed" by Marx's principles—a viewpoint that once caused De Leon to recall the following dinner story told by James Redpath:

One morning, as he [Redpath] was seated at his desk in the lecture bureau where he worked, Mark Twain burst in upon him in a great hurry, beaming and saying: "Jim, I wish you to book me for a lecture tour across the country." "Good!" thought Redpath to himself, "there is money in a lecture tour by Mark." "Good!" said he to Mark Twain, as he opened the book of lectures and dates, and took up his pen. "Good! What's the subject, Mark?" With a wooden Indian face the answer came: "Astronomy." "What!" exclaimed Redpath perplexed. "What do you know about astronomy?" The reply followed with a snapping of eyes: "Not a damn. That's just the beauty of it. I shall be untrammelled by science." ["Marxian Science and the Colleges."]

"Untrammelled by science" sums up the history of the floundering "leftists," of the "Communists" who long ago allowed Stalinist expediency to lead them into the most flagrant violations of Marx's principles, of the opportunist Trotskyites, of the reformist "Socialist" party. Only the Socialist Labor Party has achieved and retained Marxist integrity. It has done this by an unswerving adherence to science, and by consistently refusing to compromise for the sake of some transient gain. "Socialism," said De Leon, "is neither an aspiration of angels, nor a plot of devils. Socialism moves with its feet firmly planted on 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 SLP teaches *scientific* Socialism, the only Socialism worthy of the name. As a result the products of its education are men and women who understand the forces of history and the meaning and implications of the class struggle. They have confidence in the working class, and in the ability of the working class to emancipate itself, because they have confidence in science.

"Ex-Socialists," or people who claim they "used to be Socialists," are all over the place. Actually, their "Socialism" was never more than skin deep. They were "practical." They rejected Marx's principles as "too doctrinaire" or "out of date." They took the road of "radical" reform and argued that "half a loaf is better than none." And when the reform show was taken away from them by the New Dealers and Fair Dealers, they wound up disillusioned and often embittered. But among these sorry relics you will not find any De Leonists. For De Leonists are products of a sound Socialist education and are neither demoralized nor scattered by the storms that beat upon them, however severe.

*

Everyone knows of the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel. The people decided to build a tower "whose top may reach unto heaven." But Jehovah put a stop to the project by confounding their language so they couldn't understand one another. For unity of action requires unity of thought, and unity of thought requires that when we say a thing we all mean the same thing—it requires explicit terminology.

For example, what does "Socialism" mean?

To the "Communist" the Soviet Union is a "Socialist" country—even though it is ruled, not democratically by the workers, but despotically by a gang of "Communist" bureaucrats. In Russia, the land, factories, mines, railroads, etc., are owned by the State, and the State is under the absolute control of the top hierarchs of the Communist party, a control backed up by the coercive powers of the State. But the very existence of the political State in Russia evidences the phony character of its "Socialism." The political State is a government based on geographical constituencies and is equipped with coercive organs susceptible to use *against* the people. Marx said: "The

existence of the State is inseparable from the existence of slavery."

The Trotskyites—an offshoot of the Communist party — are critical of the Soviet Union, but their concept of "Socialism" is nevertheless substantially the same, a society in which affairs are managed by the political State—with Trotskyites holding the reins of power instead of Stalinists. In their literature the Trotskyites refer vaguely to their goal as a "Workers and Farmers Government." Otherwise they carefully avoid discussing the administrative organization of what they call "Socialism."

The Norman Thomas Socialists' or Social Democrats' concept of "Socialism" almost defies definition. To the SP so-called Labor governments of Great Britain are "Socialist" administrations—and nationalization of the Bank of England, coal mines, utilities and transportation was a "Socialist" measure. Yet, for the British workers employed in the nationalized industries all that happened was an exchange of masters—capitalists for bureaucrats. The wage system remained unchanged, and the British coal miners had as little to say about the administration of the nationalized mines as they had when they were properties of private capitalists.

For the "Communists," Trotskyites and Social Democrats, Marx voiced his strictures against the State, and uttered his famous call for "Abolition of the wages system!" in vain.

What *does* "Socialism" mean?

This is the way Daniel De Leon defined the goal of bona fide Socialism:

"Socialism is the social system under which the necessities of production [factories, tools, land, transportation, etc.] are owned, controlled and administered by the people, for the people, and under which, accordingly, the cause of political and economic despotism having been abolished, class rule is at an end. That is Socialism, nothing short of that."

Note here that the *people* are to own the industries, not the State; the State will be dismantled when the people, the workers organized (as we shall presently see) into Socialist Industrial Unions, take over.

Note also that the *people* are to administer the economy, not a politically appointed bureaucracy. They will do so through their own democratically controlled representatives.

Finally, note that class rule (including the bastardized rule of bureaucratic masters) ends with the triumph of Socialism.

This course in scientific Socialism will emphasize

correct terminology, so when we use the term Socialism in describing the next higher stage of social organization we all know it means the society De Leon's definition describes.

You should copy this and other definitions in your notebooks, along with your answers to the self-testing questions that will follow each lesson. Your notebooks may then become valuable as reference works to which you will find yourselves returning again and again.

As for the scope of the course, it will examine three fundamentals of scientific Socialism—the class struggle, materialist conception of history and Marxian economics—with sufficient depth to give the serious student a solid intellectual foundation for his Socialist convictions. It is not intended to exhaust these subjects. That would be impossible, for Socialism is a science that offers limitless vistas. However, readers who faithfully study each installment, together with reading assignments, and who think through and write answers to the self-testing questions, will be rewarded with a vastly greater understanding of our society and what must be done to change it and terminate the exploitation and perils of class rule.

The course is designed for beginners. But Socialists who do not consider themselves beginners, includ-

ing members of the SLP, may profitably take it as a refresher course.

Finally, this course is not offered as a substitute for the study classes conducted in many cities by local organizations of the SLP. Readers who live in these communities should enroll in regular study classes, for here they will have the advantage of regular consultation with experienced instructors.

This course has been carefully thought out. It is designed to produce men and women whose Socialist convictions are soundly based and who will throw themselves into the work of Socialism with intelligence, energy and resolution.

We suggest that students adopt a rhythm of study and that they try to complete one lesson per week. However, in some instances, where students find the reading assignment too heavy for one week, it should be spread over two. The thing that is important is not the speed with which we study but the quality of our study. Nor should the student be dismayed if there are passages in Marx and Engels he doesn't understand. To paraphrase something Engels wrote about Hegel: "If you come to a 'bog' in these writings do not let it stop you; six months later in the same bog you will find firm steppingstones and get across quite smoothly."

1. THE CLASS STRUGGLE— FACT OR FICTION?

When the defenders of the capitalist status quo talk about the class struggle, other than to deny that there ever was such a thing in America, it is usually to vent their wrath on Karl Marx. According to these gentlemen, the whole business of "classes" and "class struggle" is the diabolic invention of Karl Marx. This is untrue. Long before Marx and his lifelong friend and co-worker, Frederick Engels, wrote their famous "Communist Manifesto" of 1848, numerous observers noted that classes and class struggles had not terminated with the capitalist revolution and the overthrow of feudal rule, that indeed the postrevolutionary class struggle had but taken new forms and brought into confrontation new class opponents.

Any number of such observers could be quoted here to substantiate the point. However, we shall confine ourselves to two Americans, Albert Brisbane, father of the late Hearst columnist, Arthur Brisbane, and a New York Jacksonian, Samuel Clesson Allen.

In a book written in 1843—five years before the "Communist Manifesto" was published—Albert Brisbane said:

Capital and labor are now divorced in interest and are in opposition and capital controls—often exercises an absolute tyranny over labor. Capital is held by a small minority, while the laboring multitude, deprived of its possession, are, for the most part, the dependent hirelings, the menial subjects of capitalists.

Even more explicit was Samuel Clesson Allen, who wrote in 1833:

There are two great classes in the community founded in the relation they respectively bear to the subject of its wealth. The one is the producer [working class], and the other the accumulator [capitalist class]. The whole products are divided between them. Has not one an interest to retain as much as it can, and the other an interest to get as much as it can? . . . It is in the nature of things that government will always adapt its policy, be the theory of its constitution what it may, to the interests and aims of the predominating class . . . What government in these days has been able to stand against the power of associated wealth? It is the real dynasty of the modern states.

Karl Marx was 15 years old when this "Marxist" observation was made. It was made, of course, on the basis of facts that bourgeois (capitalist) myth and pretense could not successfully conceal, facts that Marx and Engels placed in their historical context in their epochal "Communist Manifesto," one of the greatest documents ever to issue from the pen and brain of man. Therein (pages 12 and 13 of the authenticated

New York Labor News edition) the great founders of scientific Socialism said:

The history of all hitherto existing society [since the dissolution of primitive communism] is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the middle ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations.

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature; it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

Here definitions are in order:

BOURGEOISIE—a word of French derivation meaning the *capitalist class*. Those who own the means of social production, and who live by or from the exploitation of wage labor, are of the capitalist class. This definition excludes the so-called "people's capitalists"—owners of small holdings of corporation securities. These cannot live on the income (usually quite piddling) from their stocks but must, so to speak, take their own hides to market and earn their living as wage workers.

PROLETARIAT stems from the Latin word *proles*, meaning offspring. The proletariat was the lowest class of freemen in ancient Rome. It was without property and was regarded as capable of serving the State only by having children. In modern times "proletariat" refers to the *working class*, which is also without property in the sense that it owns no tools of its own. Today those who lack ownership of the tools and must sell their labor power to the capitalists are of the working class. Although subjectively many members of the working class, such as teachers, the doctors and scientists who work for government agencies and private businesses, and other wage workers in the so-

called "white-collar" category, think of themselves as members of a "middle class," their economic status places them unmistakably in the working class.

Capitalist propaganda to the contrary notwithstanding, the tendency of capitalist development is to reduce an ever larger proportion of the population to a state of economic dependence on capital. "Ours has become a society of employees," wrote Peter F. Drucker in *Fortune*, May, 1952. "A hundred years or so ago only one out of every five Americans at work was employed, *i.e.*, worked for somebody else. Today only one out of five is not employed but working for himself."

More and more of the formerly "independent proprietors" were compelled to sell their labor power to capitalists in order to live. In this connection, in 1946 a U.S. Senate Special Committee to Study Problems of American Small Business said:

It will be noted that there has been a steady and continuous decline in the relative importance of the self-employed members of the working community. Self-employed enterprises constituted 36.9 per cent of all the gainful workers in 1880, but their proportion had fallen to 30.8 per cent at the turn of the century, to 23.5 per cent in 1920, and 18.8 per cent in 1939 . . . These changes clearly show the decline in the area of individual enterprises. There has been a decisive shift in the population toward the category of "working for others" . . .

In view of the accelerated concentration of capital in recent years, especially of the drastic decline in self-employed farmers, there are probably fewer than 10 per cent of the "gainful workers" who are self-employed today. For, the more highly developed technology becomes, the greater is the amount of capital required to stay in the competitive swim. The result is that huge concentrations of capital are relentlessly taking over the nation's economy. Many of the small businesses survive today only as subcontractors to giant business, or franchise operators. Even in agriculture, many thousands of farmers are giving up "independent farming" for the more "secure" but subservient status of contract farming.¹

As noted above, in its mass propaganda, capitalism strives to present the image of a united society, without classes or conflicting class interests.

The reason is self-evident. The capitalists are afraid the American workers may become conscious of themselves as a class, conscious that they have a

¹ Under contract farming, which is spreading rapidly in poultry, pork, beef and milk production, the farmer becomes, in effect, the hired hand of a corporation. He undertakes to deliver so many broilers, swine, etc., at a fixed price. He operates according to specifications given him, utilizing the kind and amount of feed, etc., prescribed. Earl F. Crouse, vice president of a well-known farm consulting company, says: "A system of contract farming patterned after the contracts and subcontracts of industry is being forged as rapidly as know-how and financing can be brought together."

transcending class interest in abolishing the capitalist system. Hence the incessant propaganda calculated to keep workers divided on racial and other lines, and to convince teachers, engineers, and other so-called salaried workers that they are members of a non-existent "middle class."

The essence of the modern class struggle may be simply stated. Labor—labor performed by the working class—creates all social values. The focal point of the class struggle is the division of these social values between labor (wages) and capital (profit, interest, rent, etc.). Each is under the compulsion of economic forces to increase its respective share, but if one gets *more* the other gets *less*. It is like dividing an apple in two parts. If one part is cut larger, the other must be smaller.

"The class struggle," wrote De Leon, "is an irrepressible conflict, a conflict in which the capitalist class, driven by the very law of its existence, strains for ever larger profits, and the working class, moved at first blindly by its class interests, and presently class-consciously, strains for a larger share of the product of its toil."

But, De Leon continued, "the conduct of the working class is the inevitable reaction of the action of the capitalist class. Hence seeing that the capitalist class is bound to weigh heavier and heavier upon the working class, the law of self-preservation presently formulates itself in the mind of the latter in revolt and revolution."

Or, as Marx put it: "Each step of capitalism is followed by a step of its mortal foe, Socialism."

Thus it is plain that the class struggle is not an empty principle leading nowhere. It has implications absolutely vital to Socialist success.

The first relates to *classconsciousness*. It is ironical that the capitalists who denounce classconsciousness are themselves highly classconscious. As the late William Allen White observed: "Capital is instinctively, for all the noble intentions of us capitalists, classconscious." Classconsciousness means, of course, to be conscious of what one's class interests are. And for the capitalists this means, among other things, to be conscious of the importance of holding wages down, breaking the resistance of workers to the introduction of automation and changes in work rules, and, indeed, of keeping workers ignorant and confused about the class struggle.

For workers, on the other hand, classconsciousness implies knowledge that the wage system spells slavery for them, with the prospect of massive permanent un-

employment ahead, and that freedom requires that the people who do the work collectively own and democratically administer the industries and services. It also implies a willingness to *work* for Socialism.

Finally, classconsciousness implies the knowledge that the working class must not look for leaders among the petty capitalists, or any other group, but must achieve self-reliance and win freedom for itself. One of the worst crimes perpetrated on the workers by the phony "Communists" and Social Democrats is that they are forever urging workers to form alliances with groups (such as the petty capitalists) whose class interests are served not by abolishing the capitalist system but by patching it up. Marx and Engels made the point unequivocally in a famous letter to August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht and others in which they said in part:

When the International was formed we expressly formulated the battle cry: the emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself. We cannot therefore cooperate with people who say that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves and must first be freed from above by philanthropic bourgeois and petty bourgeois.

As long as we have private ownership of the means of social production we shall have classes. And as long as we have classes we shall have class struggle. We shall terminate both classes and class struggle by making the socially operated means of production the property of all the people, that is, of society. Socialism alone can terminate the long, bloodstained history of class struggles and usher in the classless age of social harmony.

Reading Assignment:

"What Means This Strike?" by Daniel De Leon.
(Read also the SLP's "Resolution on Strikes" in the Appendix to this pamphlet.)

Self-Testing Questions

1. How would you define the modern class struggle?
2. Do technological advances tend to give the workers or the capitalists an advantage? Can you think of contemporary examples to illustrate this answer?
3. How do technological advances speed the concentration of capital?
4. What are some of the consequences to workers if their unions refuse to accept the fact and implications of the class struggle?

2. THE CLASS STRUGGLE—UNIONISM

Trade unions were a spontaneous outgrowth of the class struggle between capitalists and workers. In the beginning, the workers were unorganized and they were in competition with each other for the jobs available. The capitalists took full and ruthless advantage of the workers' isolation and competition, paying the workers starvation wages and working them excessively long hours. But the evolution of the tool, and the growth of large-scale factory production, of which the capitalists were involuntary promoters, brought large numbers of workers, unknown to each other, into a single place. "Competition divides their interests," wrote Marx in "The Poverty of Philosophy" (1847). "But the maintenance of their wages, this common interest which they have against their employer, unites them in the same idea of resistance—combination." Marx continued:

Thus combination [union] has always a double end, that of eliminating competition among [the workers] themselves while enabling them to make a general competition against the capitalist. If the first object of resistance has been merely to maintain wages, in proportion as the capitalists in their turn have combined with the idea of repression, the combinations [unions] at first isolated, have formed in groups, and, in face of constantly united capital, the maintenance of the association became more important and necessary for them than the maintenance of wages.

That is, against the efforts of the capitalists to outlaw the unions as conspiracies, and otherwise to crush them, the workers made great sacrifices to defend and extend their union organizations.

Marx logically expected the unions to develop a Socialist political concept and to accept the transformation of society as "their great historical mission." In a resolution adopted at the Geneva Congress of the First International in 1866 on "the past, present and future of trade unionism," Marx wrote:

The trade unions have concentrated all their activities exclusively in the immediate contest with capital. They have yet failed to realize the power of their activity against the very system of wage slavery. It is for that reason they have kept aloof from all political movements. They are, however, apparently awakening to some understanding of their great historical mission, as seen for instance in their recent participation in the political movement in England, in the broader outlook upon their functions in the United States . . .

But Marx's optimism was premature, as we shall see in examining briefly the subsequent history of unionism in the United States.

The post-Civil War decades in the U.S. were years

of rapid industrialization. During the 60s the Bessemer converter was introduced and steel replaced iron as the backbone of industry. In 1864 the McKay sewing machine replaced shoemaking by hand methods with machine production. Throughout industry, machines were introduced rapidly, and factories that formerly employed tens and hundreds employed thousands. Expanding industry required ever more wage slaves. Some of these were Negroes, freedmen who found their way to Northern cities, but most came by shiploads from Europe.

Intensified exploitation, disease, undernourishment, overcrowding in squalid slums made life miserable for a growing mass of American workers. A logical consequence was a growth in union organization. The turbulent 70s witnessed the rise of the first nationwide union movement—the Knights of Labor. Its slogan was "an injury to one is the concern of all." It sought to organize not only the skilled craftsmen but also the growing army of unskilled industrial workers.

Of the Knights of Labor, Henry Kuhn, a former National Secretary of the Socialist Labor Party, wrote:

. . . There existed in the Order a distinct revulsion against the craft-union spirit and, in a crude and groping way, they had hold of the germ of the idea of industrial unionism, as far as that was possible in those days. . . . A healthy class instinct animated them and, to paraphrase a familiar saying, "They were on the way, though they didn't know where to go." Often have I mused what might have been had the SLP of 1899 existed in 1833, had it been possible to instill into that fermenting mass the spirit and the knowledge the SLP of 1899 possessed, backed by the power and material resources then at its [the K of L's] command, enabling it to transmute class instinct into classconsciousness. ("Daniel De Leon—The Man and His Work.")

But by 1899 the Knights of Labor was in decline and thoroughly corrupted by its faker leadership.

Meanwhile, in 1886, the American Federation of Labor was formed. From the outset the AFL sought only to organize skilled workers. As one of its founders, Adolph Strasser, explained its philosophy and objective:

We have no ultimate ends. We are going on from day to day. We are fighting only for immediate objects—objects that can be realized in a few years . . . We are all practical men.

Yet, so powerful were the class-struggle currents of the period that even the conservative AFL was impelled to pay lip service to this overriding conflict.

Thus the organization's constitution said in part:

. . . A struggle is going on in all nations of the civilized world, a struggle between the capitalist and laborer, which grows in intensity from year to year, and will work disastrous results to the toiling millions if they are not combined for mutual protection . . .

Ironically, this acknowledgment remained a part of the AFL's constitution for decades after the organization openly embraced the doctrine of "brotherhood between capital and labor."

The Socialist Labor Party perceived clearly the antiworking-class character of the leadership of both the K of L and the AFL. To try to inoculate the unions with Socialist revolutionary principles, and defeat the labor fakers (the SLP designation for pro-capitalist union leaders) it attempted to "bore from within." De Leon himself led the fight in the Knights of Labor. As Henry Kuhn related it:

But it [the K of L] still had respectable numbers and, with all the vim of his energetic personality, De Leon set to work to clean out that nest of fakers. He beat Powderly [Terence V. Powderly, General Master Workman] and made him quit, only to see him rewarded with a political job by the capitalist class he had served so well. He beat Powderly's successor, a fellow named James R. Sovereign, but it was found in the end that the whole fabric of the organization was rotten and nothing could be gained by capturing what had been reduced to a nest of crooks.

Attempts at boring within the AFL were similarly futile. There the SLP learned that to bore from within to a purpose resulted in boring its way out, so secure was the labor-faker hold on that organization.

The Knights of Labor faded rapidly, but the AFL continued to spread its labor-dividing principles and doctrines. Instead of inculcating among its members the spirit of classconsciousness, it inculcated *job-consciousness* and craft vanity. In order to monopolize skilled jobs for a favored few it deliberately adopted the policy of excluding the mass of workers from union membership. It built Chinese walls of high initiation fees around the unions, introduced tricky examinations for apprentices and even "closed the books." Its ideal was the "closed shop," which gave it an absolute monopoly of the jobs.

The AFL's rejection of the principle of the class struggle also led it logically to adopt a racist stand under which it clamored for restrictive immigration laws and adopted "lily-white" rules that effectively excluded Negroes and Orientals. Where Negroes were admitted to union membership in Southern states they were segregated into Jim Crow locals.

(It is interesting, and revealing, to recall that the Socialist party, which ever sought to attach itself as the tail to the AFL kite, likewise segregated its Negro members in the South into Jim Crow locals! And, in

a further attempt to ingratiate itself with the AFL fakers, the SP's delegates to the Amsterdam Congress of the Socialist International in 1904 introduced a resolution endorsing restrictions on immigration of "inferior races" which were described in parentheses in these words, "such as Chinese, Negroes, etc." Subsequently the resolution's SP sponsors substituted "backward" for "inferior.")

In contrast to the slogan of the old K of L ("an injury to one is the concern of all") the AFL practiced the principle of "every union for itself and devil take the hindmost." This led logically to two practices that have given the so-called "labor movement" of the country a rat-pit character.

One of these was jurisdictional disputes—competition between union hierarchies for control of jobs and duespayers, as well as bitter rivalry for jobs opened up by the never ending changes in technology.

The other was outright scabbing by unions upon unions, usually to the accompaniment of the plea that "we can't break our sacred contracts."

The rejection of the class struggle by the AFL (and by the CIO, when that body was formed, and by kindred unions), and acceptance of the concept that there is a community of interest between capital and labor, paved the way for the dictatorial control of unions by labor fakers. And the labor fakers have been able to commit all manner of treachery in the name of "labor." It was De Leon who first spelled out the significance of the strategic position (inside the camp of labor) that is held by procapitalist union leaders. And it was De Leon who exposed their real role as that of labor lieutenants of the capitalist class.

Today the collusion between the labor fakers and employers has become so brazen that it has engendered widespread hostility toward union hierarchies among the rank and file. Employers do most of the recruiting of new union members (under "union"-shop agreements) and collect most of the dues for the unions (via the "checkoff"). The labor fakers reciprocate with an endless succession of diversionary tactics to keep the rank and file from grasping the real issue—the need to end wage slavery. Despite the services of the capitalist labor lieutenants, the capitalists often adopt an anti-union posture, but the clearer headed among them warn repeatedly against policies that might cripple the unions in the labor-herding role. As Max Ways put it in his essay on "Labor Unions Are Worth the Price" in the May, 1963, issue of *Fortune*:

Clearer understanding might convince management [the

capitalists] that it has deeper interests parallel to the deeper interests of Meany & Co.

*

The procapitalist unions have not held the field unchallenged. In 1895 a union appeared on the American scene that openly accepted the class struggle and its implications. It was the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance. Ten years later the ST&LA was merged into the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), another union that accepted as its "great historical mission" the abolition of the wage system — capitalism. The IWW disappeared as a Socialist union in 1908 when it was captured by anarchist elements, but in its brief life it projected some of the principles upon which a rebirth of classconscious unionism will eventually rise.

Reading Assignment:

- "Two Pages From Roman History" by Daniel De Leon (Pages 9-66)
- "Unionism: Fraudulent or Genuine?" by Nathan Karp (Pages 1-31)

Self-Testing Questions

1. What are the nature and source of the strategic strength of the labor leader?
2. What are the interests of the union leaders as opposed to those of the union members?
3. In what ways do union leaders consolidate and extend their control over the rank and file?
4. In how many ways do procapitalist unions tend to divide the American working class?
5. In what ways do procapitalist unions serve the interests of the capitalist master class?

3. THE CLASS STRUGGLE— REFORM OR REVOLUTION?—I

In a famous letter signed jointly by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (from which we quoted briefly in Lesson 1), the two founders of scientific Socialism underscored as inflexible and unchanging the principle that the working class must emancipate itself. They wrote:

As for ourselves, in view of our whole past, there is only one path open to us. For almost 40 years we have stressed the class struggle as the immediate driving force of history, and in particular the class struggle between the bourgeoisie [capitalists] and the proletariat [workers] as the great lever of the modern social revolution; it is therefore impossible for us to cooperate with people who wish to expunge this class struggle from the movement. When the International was formed we expressly formulated the battle-cry: **THE EMANCIPATION OF THE WORKING CLASS MUST BE ACHIEVED BY THE WORKING CLASS ITSELF.**

But for the working class to emancipate itself presupposes an enlightened working class, a working class that knows what it wants and how it is going to get there.

In other words, to borrow the phrasing from one of Daniel De Leon's great speeches, "The Warning of the Gracchi" (see "Two Pages From Roman History"): "*The proletarian army of emancipation cannot consist of a dumb driven herd. The very idea is a contradiction in terms.*"

It is the Socialist Labor Party, and the Socialist Labor Party alone, that has pursued a policy strictly in accord with the principle that *the working class must emancipate itself*, and that the working-class army of emancipation "cannot consist of a dumb driven herd." On the other hand, the defunct Socialist party, bankrupt Communist party, Trotskyites and other so-called "radicals" have pursued policies based on the premise that the workers must be attracted to "radicalism" with reform bait and organized into reform parties where, presumably, they would be available for manipulation by the leaders of these movements.

The consequences of the latter, anti-Marxist, policy are well known. The millions of discontented, and potentially revolutionary American workers who were lured down the road of reform by the "radicals" in the 1920s and early 1930s turned to the political party that was plainly in the best position to deliver the goods—the "New Deal" Democrats, one of the out-and-out parties of capitalism. Moreover, the "New Deal" of Franklin D. Roosevelt and subsequent re-

form Administrations *have* delivered the reform goods, and more "liberal" reforms are on the way. But instead of strengthening the Socialist movement these reforms have tended to bolster the capitalist system—as indeed they were meant to do! On this point we have the unequivocal testimony of President Roosevelt himself, who said in a campaign address, Sept. 29, 1936:

. . . The true conservative seeks to protect the system of private property and free enterprise [capitalism] by correcting such injustices and inequalities as arise from it . . . Liberalism becomes the protection for the farsighted conservative . . . "The voice of great events is proclaiming to us—reform if you would preserve."

Thus all the reforms that have presumably "benefited" the workers—Social Security, the Wages and Hours Act, public housing and similar measures—have in fact helped to prolong the evil-breeding capitalist system in which workers are reduced to abject poverty and subjected to merciless exploitation. Meanwhile, so-called "progressive" reforms have helped to confuse the workers concerning what must be done to build a decent world of brotherhood, peace and security for all. Many workers have been so thoroughly brainwashed by "liberals" and radicals" with the idea that Roosevelt was a "great leader" and that New Deal reforms were "steps in the right direction" that even at this late date, at a time when the shadows of job-killing automation and capitalist depression fall coldly across the lives of tens of millions of workers, they are still working passionately for measures that, if granted, would serve as additional props for capitalism. That is, they would tend to prop up the very system that is responsible for mass poverty in the midst of plenty, unemployment, racial discrimination, and all the other evils that weigh so heavily on the working class today.

But let us understand exactly what we mean when we say "reform" and when we say "revolution."

Ferdinand Lassalle, the German Socialist of the 19th century, made this differentiation:

Revolution means transmutation, and a revolution is, accordingly, accomplished whenever . . . an entirely new principle is substituted for what is already in effect. A reform, on the other hand, is effected in case the existing situation is maintained in point of principle, but with a [supposedly] more humane . . . working out of this principle.

To illustrate: If the workers were to unite po-

litically and economically on class lines to outlaw private or capitalist ownership of the economy, and to make the land and instruments of production *social* property to be administered socially for the benefit of all the people—that would be a *revolution*, a transformation, not merely of externals, but of the inner principle and mechanism of society. But if capitalist ownership and the relationship of capital and wage labor are retained and all the “progressive” measures that come under the head of welfare statism were enacted, plus the nationalization of “basic industries” (as some reformers prescribe)—that would be *reform*, a mere change of externals. Society’s inner mechanism would be unchanged.

Is a demand, say, for civil rights a “reform”?

The answer is “No!” Civil rights are already embodied in the basic law of the land—the United States Constitution. But the capitalist rulers of this country have flouted the Constitution’s civil-rights guarantees. In demanding civil rights, therefore, we do not ask a capitalist legislature to grant “relief” or “improvements”; we demand rather that the capitalists live up to their own laws and their own pious boasts. A demand for civil rights, in short, is no more a “reform” than would be a demand for free speech, a right guaranteed by the First Amendment, whenever *this* right is violated.

What about an economic demand, such as a demand for higher wages; is THIS a “reform”?

Again, the answer is “No!” Reforms are political. Demands for reforms are made of the political State. Demands made of the capitalist State are of the nature of begging. But demands for higher wages, shorter hours, improved working conditions, etc., are demands made by the workers of their capitalist exploiters. These demands, backed up by the tacit or explicit threat of workers’ economic action, square with the ultimate goal for which the workers must eventually organize—the taking of the whole of their product, past and present.

The significance of this differentiation is spelled out by De Leon in an editorial entitled “Demands—‘Immediate’ and ‘Constant’ ” (published as an appendix in the pamphlet “From Reform to Bayonets”). It suffices here to point out that workers *must* make demands of the capitalists on the economic field if they would not “be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches.” “By cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital,” said Marx, “they

would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement.”

But didn’t Marx and Engels advocate “reform” in “The Communist Manifesto”?

We pose the question here because the student who has read “The Communist Manifesto” may have confused the revolutionary measures listed at the end of Section II with reforms. Also, because would-be “Marxists” who advocate reforms today may cite these measures in justification.

Bear in mind that the “Manifesto” was written in 1847 (it was published early in 1848) when no country was really ripe for Socialism. That is, the socialization of production had not progressed sufficiently in the mid-nineteenth century to form the basis for Socialism and if the workers were to wrest political power from the capitalists under these conditions they would still have to accomplish the transformation to Socialism by stages. Thus the “Manifesto” called on the workers to take political power. “. . . the first step in the revolution by the working class,” it said, “is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.” The “Manifesto” then proposed that the proletariat “use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie”—and it listed a number of what Engels described (in his preface) as “revolutionary measures” for accomplishing this.

Advocating measures to be put into effect *after* the workers achieved political supremacy, after they had become the “ruling class,” is a far cry from demanding—begging—reforms of the capitalist State.

Finally, as students will note when they read “The Communist Manifesto” (it will be the textbook for a forthcoming lesson), Engels suggested in an 1872 preface to the “Manifesto” that the measures had become outdated, saying:

. . . The practical application of the [“Manifesto’s”] principles will depend, as the manifesto itself states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions for the time being existing, and, for that reason, no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Section II.

For the working class, the class whose interests are incarnate in revolution, in a fundamental social change, clarity on the question of reforms is of the utmost—repeat, *utmost*—importance. It is not merely that reforms tend to prolong the capitalist system, and along with the system its brood of evils; it is not merely that reforms that palliate the suffering of the oppressed “tend to sweet-scent the capitalist rule”; it is also and mainly that reforms, instead of preparing workers for revolution, tend to corrupt and render them incapable

of emancipating themselves. Why this is so is the central theme of Lesson 4.

Reading Assignment:

- "Reform or Revolution" by Daniel De Leon
- "From Reform to Bayonets" by Arnold Petersen
- "Demands: 'Immediate' and 'Constant'" by Daniel De Leon (This essay is an appendix in "From Reform to Bayonets")

Self-Testing Questions

1. Why is a central directing authority necessary in an industrial society?
2. What is it that determines the "morality" of a class?
3. What was the historic "mission" of capitalism?
4. Was it logical or illogical that Roosevelt should use bayonets against strikers? Why?
5. How do we know conditions are ripe for a fundamental social change?

4. THE CLASS STRUGGLE— REFORM OR REVOLUTION—II

During the first ten years—1890-1900—of the Socialist Labor Party's existence as a Marxist party, its platforms were, in effect, contradictory. They affirmed the fact and implications of the class struggle. They declared that labor's emancipation from wage slavery was the object of the Socialist or labor movement. In short, they called for *revolution*. But attached to the platforms were "tapeworms" of immediate demands—*reforms*.

Today, the contradiction is obvious to every Marxist Socialist. Reforms are as out of place in a Socialist platform as they would have been in the Declaration of Independence. But when the SLP was reorganized on its Marxist basis there was a tradition of "immediate demands," and it took time, experience, and thoughtful analysis before the Party fully understood that the immediate demands in its platforms negated the all-important revolutionary demand.

Daniel De Leon brought the issue into the spotlight with his famous address, "Reform or Revolution," in 1896. Therein he showed, among other things, that reforms in the platforms of labor were corrupting and could lead to disaster. He said:

Revolutions triumphed, whenever they did triumph, by asserting themselves and marching straight upon their goal. On the other hand, the fate of Wat Tyler [14th century leader of an English peasant revolt] 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 [King] Richard II, who promised "relief"—and brought it by marching the men to the gallows.

But "Reform or Revolution" was by no means De Leon's last word on the nature and peril of reforms. His analysis went deeper, and it was spurred by the emergence in 1900 of a "radical" reformist party in a "Socialist" garb — the so-called Socialist party. The Socialist party was a classic example of what Frederick Engels called "petty-bourgeois Socialism." In "The Housing Question" Engels wrote:

This [petty-bourgeois Socialism] takes the form that while the fundamental views of modern Socialism and the demand for the transformation of all the means of production into social property are recognized as justified, however, the realization of this is declared possible only in the distant future, a future which for all practical purposes is quite out of sight. Thus, for the present time, one has to have recourse to mere social patchwork, and sympathy can be shown, according to circumstances, even with the most reactionary efforts for so-called "uplifting the working classes."

Every conceivable reform that might attract the votes of discontented workers and petty capitalists was put into Socialist party platforms. SP men, to whom De Leonists were regarded as "impossibilists," argued this way: "You can't catch flies with vinegar [meaning a revolutionary program]; you need honey [reforms] to catch flies." To this the SLP replied that it was after men, not flies, and that support attracted by reform bait was of a dubious quality. But this, of course, did not supply a critique of reforms in depth. The critique was supplied by Daniel De Leon in one of two brilliant addresses which are published in the pamphlet, "Two Pages From Roman History." The address was called "The Warning of the Gracchi" and it utilized the experience of the Gracchi brothers, Tiberius (168-133 B.C.) and Gaius (159-121 B.C.) to show how reforms may be used by ruling classes as sops and palliatives to paralyze and delude the oppressed and to prolong their rule.

To understand the unique and vital warning embodied in De Leon's address one must keep in focus a Marxist premise stressed in Lessons 1 and 2. It is the premise—or principle—that *the working class must emancipate itself*. No Moses is going to appear to lead the workers out of the capitalist wilderness, and no "kind-hearted" bourgeois are going to reach down to offer a helping hand. As Marx and Engels put it in their letter of September, 1879 (we repeat this quotation for purposes of emphasis and suggest that the student commit it to memory):

The emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself. We cannot therefore cooperate with people who say that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves and must first be freed from above by philanthropic bourgeois and petty bourgeois.

And in an introduction to Marx's "The Class Struggles in France," Engels emphasized that this principle required Socialist or revolutionary education, saying:

. . . The time is past for revolutions carried through by small minorities at the head of unconscious masses. When it gets to be a matter of the complete transformation of the social organization, the masses themselves must participate, must understand what is at stake and why they are to act.

But here, as De Leon pointed out in his "Warning of the Gracchi," a great difficulty arises. "The work-

ing class, the subject class upon whom depends the overthrow of capitalism and the raising of Socialism, differs from all previous subject classes called upon by history to throw down an old and set up a new social system." What was this difference?

Going no further back than the days of feudalism [said De Leon], we see that the distinctive mark of the bourgeoisie, or the then revolutionary class, was the possession of the material means essential to its own economic system; on the contrary, the distinctive mark of the proletariat today is the being wholly stripped of all such material possession. While wealth, logically enough, was the badge of the revolutionary bourgeoisie, poverty, likewise logically enough, is the badge of the proletariat.

This key differentiation established a serious difference "in the tactical quality of the two forces, a difference that imparted strength to the former [bourgeois] revolutionary forces under fire, while it imparts weakness to the proletariat."

Elaborating the point, De Leon noted that the feudal ruling class could and did, on occasion, bestow "hollow honors, throwing them as sops to the leaders of the bourgeoisie." But "rattles and toys" couldn't lead the bourgeois revolution into the ground. "Wealth imparts strength; strength self-reliance. Where this is coupled with class interests [such as the interests of the bourgeoisie], whose development is hampered by social shells, the shell is bound to be broken through." In short, reforms could not successfully sidetrack the bourgeoisie from their revolutionary objective.

De Leon continued:

Differently with the proletariat. It is a force, every atom of which has a stomach to fill, with wife and children with stomachs to fill, and, withal, a precarious ability to attend to such urgent needs, Cato the Elder [famous Roman statesman] said in his usual blunt way: "The belly has no ears." At times this circumstance may be a force, but it is only a fitful force. Poverty breeds lack of self-reliance. Material insecurity suggests temporary devices. Sops and lures become captivating baits. And the one and the other are in the power of the present ruling class to maneuver with.

De Leon then proceeded to use historical analogy brilliantly in support of his thesis. Utilizing his immense store of classical knowledge he demonstrated how radical reformism led to the undoing of the Roman proletariat—and of the radical reformers (the Gracchi brothers) themselves, whom De Leon acknowledged to be men of "noble aspirations." It is not our purpose to sketch this remarkable argument. It must be read and studied—and read again—in the context of the address. It is climaxed in ten canons of the proletarian revolution, ten lessons of the first magnitude in importance for anyone who wants to play an intelligent role in the Socialist movement. All emphasize the theme that for the working class to emancipate itself it must be free of reform illusions

and clear on its revolutionary goal. It is the workers' vulnerability to reforms that makes them so dangerous. As De Leon re-emphasized the point:

. . . The characteristic weakness of the proletariat renders it prone to lures. It, the least favored of all historic revolutionary classes, is called upon to carry out a revolution that is pivoted upon the most complicated synthesis, and one withal that is easiest to be obscured by the dust that its very foe, the capitalist class, is able to raise most plentifully. The essence of this revolution—the overthrow of wage slavery—cannot be too forcefully held up. Nor can the point be too forcefully kept in evidence that, short of the abolition of wage slavery, all "improvements" either accrue to capitalism, or are the merest moonshine where they are not sidetracks.

It is the workers' extreme vulnerability to promises of "improvements" that has made them the targets of petty capitalist reform movements. Again and again in American history the workers have been lured with reform promises into pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for the petty bourgeoisie. Misguided workers played a large "grass-roots" role in getting the Sherman Anti-Trust Act passed. (Ironically, but logically, workers were its first victims. The hatters' union, which had declared a boycott against the Danbury hat capitalists, was fined \$240,000 for violating the anti-trust laws!) Workers have also been trapped into supporting the petty capitalists on such purely bourgeois issues as tariffs, money reforms, taxation, freight rates, etc.

Nor have "radicals" on-the-make been slow in exploiting workers' vulnerability to reforms. But the irony of this is that, instead of sticking with the "radical reformers," the workers who were lured by reforms decamped to the Democratic party, the party, that is, that could deliver the goods—just as De Leon had warned they would do in 1902.

The SP reformer, Norman Thomas, has alternately complained and boasted that the major parties have stolen the Socialist party's platform. In 1936, Thomas told a newsman:

Mr. [Franklin D.] Roosevelt is the best friend capitalism has. It probably would have gone under before this had it not been for him. He has adopted and adapted some Socialist [meaning Socialist party] ideas and used them as props for a shaky, falling structure. Without their support it would have already collapsed. (New York "Times," June 7, 1936.)

Thus, in effect, Thomas conceded that his party, which claims to be "Socialist," helped to keep capitalism from going down.

Nor were the "Communists" behind the SP in exploiting the workers' vulnerability to reforms. The "Communists" went so far as to give open and uninhibited support to Roosevelt and the New Deal. To this day they praise F.D.R. notwithstanding the fact that Roosevelt himself declared that his New Deal

reforms were inspired by the purpose of saving the capitalist system!

"The revolutionist," De Leon warned, "must never throw sops at the revolutionary element. The instant he does, he places himself at the mercy of the foe; he can always be outsopped."

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The consummation of the Socialist revolution will require of the workers, at least of the politically active advance brigades, the ability to examine situations and developments intelligently in the clear light of the class struggle. This is the touchstone. For, although Socialism is the next logical stage in the evolution of society, its establishment will not be an automatic affair. As De Leon put it:

"The Socialist Republic will not leap into existence out of the existing social loom, as a yard of calico is turned out by a Northrup loom. Nor will its only possible architect, the working class—that is, the wage earners, or wage slaves, the modern prole-

tariat — figure in the process as a mechanical force moved mechanically. In other words, the world's theater of social evolution is not a Punch and Judy box, nor the actors on that world's stage manikins, operated with wires."

Reading Assignment:

"Bourgeois Socialism" by Arnold Petersen
(Part One—page 15 to 118)

"Two Pages From Roman History" by Daniel De Leon
("The Warning of the Gracchi")

Self-Testing Questions

1. In what ways was the Socialist party a reflex of AFL craft unionism?
2. Why is it so vital that the issue of wage slavery be not obscured?
3. What's wrong with the argument that "half a loaf is better than none?" That "by reforms we can work TOWARD Socialism?" That "workers become politically educated fighting for reforms?"
4. What happens to the moral fiber of the mass when it is enticed into reform movements?
5. How would you deal with the argument: "But isn't a reform that palliates some evil a GOOD thing?"

5. THE CLASS STRUGGLE— LEVER OF HISTORICAL PROGRESS

Karl Marx, as we have already noted, did not invent the class struggle. He did not even discover it. What Marx *did* discover was that the class struggle is an instrument of historical and social progress. Throughout their lives, Marx and Engels stressed the importance of understanding the class struggle in this light. In the joint letter they addressed to Liebknecht, Bebel and others, referred to earlier, they stated explicitly: "For almost 40 years we have stressed the class struggle as the immediate driving force of history, and in particular the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the great lever of the modern social revolution." (Our italics.)

Despite the apathy and inertness that now pervade the American working class, despite the prejudice and fears that now keep it divided, the class struggle is still "the immediate driving force of history," still "the great lever of the modern social revolution." For sooner or later, the working class will be forced by historical circumstances to act. In one of his earliest works — "The Holy Family" — Marx explained this historical compulsion. And he expressly denied that he was turning the workers — proletarians — into gods when he credited them with the future historic role of overthrowing the system of private property. His point was that "the living conditions of the proletariat represent the focal point of all inhuman conditions in contemporary society, because the human being is lost in the proletariat, but has won a theoretical consciousness of loss and is compelled by unavoidable and absolutely compulsory need (the practical expression of necessity) to revolt against this inhumanity . . ." He summed up:

It [the proletariat] does not go through the hard but hardening school of labor fruitlessly. It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the proletariat as a whole, may imagine for the moment to be the aim. It is a question of what the proletariat actually is and what it will be compelled to do historically as the result of this being. The aim and the historical action of the proletariat are laid down in advance, irrevocably and obviously, in its own situation in life and in the whole organization of contemporary bourgeois society.

We should not therefore be discouraged if in this specific hour in history workers generally show less awareness of the dangers that lie ahead and of the culpability of capitalism than we do. As the Polish

Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg, put it in a letter written from a prison cell on Feb. 16, 1917:

There is nothing more subject to rapid change than human psychology. The Psyche of the masses embraces a whole world, a world of almost limitless possibilities: breathless calm and raging storm; base treachery and supreme heroism. The masses always represent what historical conditions make of them at a given moment, and the masses are always profoundly capable of being very different to what they may appear at any given moment. It's a poor navigator who steers his ship by the superficial weather signs around him, and fails to use the means science has given him to foresee approaching storms. "Disappointment" in the masses is always a compromising sign for political leaders. A real leader, a leader of real moment, will make his tactics dependent not on the temporary spirit of the masses, but on the inexorable laws of historical development. He will steer his course by these laws in defiance of all disappointments and he will rely on history to bring about the gradual maturing of his actions.

Beginning with Lesson 6 we shall examine "the inexorable laws of historical development" to which Luxemburg alluded. Here we shall note some of the conditions that sooner or later will arouse the spirit of revolt that is latent in the working class.

In this connection, in a De Leon birthday celebration address, Arnold Petersen observed that "to celebrate De Leon's [birthday] is to celebrate *the future* as well as the past. And in this lies great significance. For, other things apart, *the future* is essentially the concern of science, and science, in the language of De Leon, implies *prescience*, that is the power to foresee." By this is not meant that Marxists possess a magic crystal ball but simply that their understanding of the motivating forces of human history enables them to anticipate the probable consequences of socio-economic forces developing and observable in society today. For example, it is evident that automation, which even now is wiping out tens of thousands of jobs each week, is creating a vast army of permanently unemployed workers. Not since the early decades of the Industrial Revolution (in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) have the capitalists had the workers so completely at their mercy. This is reflected in the growing contempt that capitalists today exhibit in their relations with labor.

Marxists observed long ago the importance in social dynamics of the contempt that is generated by ruling classes for the ruled. In a brilliant 1905 editorial De Leon explained that the rulers' contempt, which the workers perfidiously invited by their be-

havior, was vital in conditioning the workers for the act of revolution. He wrote:

... failing to see below the surface of things, there are those who are heard to despair of the American working class. They pronounce it dumb and numb—hopeless. Not so . . . the temporary numbness and dumbness to outrage on the part of a class, designated by its economic interests as the bearer of the revolution next in order, is a necessary contribution to revolutionary conditions. Revolutionary conditions are not ripe until the respective ruling class . . . has acquired so ingrained a contempt for the class below that it considers the same not only unfit for aught but slavery, but also incapable of aught but submission. Not until then is that ruling class sufficiently seasoned to fulfill the last remaining mission left it to fulfill — the offering of the requisite resistance without which, the hour having sounded for the ferment of revolution to stir the revolutionary mass, the revolution would fizzle down . . .

The perfidy of a revolutionary class, in inspiring contempt for itself, and thereby confirming its despots in their habits of despotism, is an unconscious act that, proceeding from the revolutionary class, turns its oppressor himself into a midwife for the revolution . . . ["Daily People," Feb. 4, 1905].

The point is illustrated by the Negro civil rights movement initiated in 1963. This movement in its essence is a manifestation of the class struggle disguised as a "race" movement. It is a revolt of workers who by and large constitute the most oppressed layer of the working class. But it is a revolt, not against the system that oppresses them as such, but against the effects of the system.

Nevertheless, the movement has lessons of great importance to the whole working class. For decades Negro unrest simmered, and for several years it boiled up sporadically, as in the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott and the sit-ins and the freedom rides. But the catalyst for the national movement was the crassly conceived demonstration of ruling class contempt for the ruled that was manifested in Birmingham in the jailing of hundreds of Negro children, the use of vicious police dogs against the Negro demonstrators and of high power fire hoses, in short, the utter barbarity of so-called law-enforcement officers in defense of the race-segregated status quo.

No one knows *how* precisely the capitalist class will set the working class revolutionary movement into motion, but when the revolutionary ferment grows capitalism's "Bull" Connors¹ may be depended upon, at a certain stage, to commit the acts of brutal folly that will tear the blinders from the eyes of the mass, and arouse them to indignation and action. What Lord

¹ "Bull" Connor was the police head in Birmingham, Alabama, who directed the attacks on Negro demonstrators and who ordered the use of police dogs and fire hoses, and the arrest of children.

North's redcoats did for the American Revolution when they marched into Middlesex, what the soldiers of the subversive Southern slaveocracy did for the antislavery movement when they fired on Fort Sumter, the agents of outmoded capitalism's misrule may be depended upon to do for the Socialist Revolution, for the revolution, that is, that will end class rule and exploitation for all time.

It is for this crucial hour that all Marxists prepare — prepare themselves by endless study, and prepare their fellow workers by spreading Socialist enlightenment and especially by keeping the transcending issue of wage slavery in constant focus.

Confidence in the capacity of the working class to slough off its apathy, and to generate revolutionary initiative—in short, to emancipate itself—is the fruit, not of wishfulness, but of understanding of Marxian science.

We are now about to examine a principle of Marxian science that reveals to us the underlying and motivating forces of history. As initial preparation for understanding this principle—Marx's materialist conception of history—and to gain understanding concerning the origin of social classes we shall read one of the greatest documents ever to issue from the mind and pen of man. It is the "Communist Manifesto." This is a document that the serious student will return to again and again, underlining passages that seem to him most revealing and pertinent. And he will keep on doing this because each time he re-reads the "Manifesto" he will approach it on a higher plane of understanding.

Reading Assignment:

"The Communist Manifesto" by Marx and Engels
The two American introductions to the superb New York Labor News authorized edition.
Engels's preface.
(Pages 11-33—Part I of the "Manifesto" proper.)

Self-Testing Questions

1. In what ways that you can think of has the capitalist class, historically, played a revolutionary part?
2. How does the "Manifesto" characterize the modern political State?
3. How do the capitalists get over recurring commercial crises?
4. Why must the capitalists "nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere?"
5. Why is the proletariat the only "really revolutionary class" today?

6. THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY v. CAPITALIST "IDEALISM"

In introducing beginners to Marxian science it is our endeavor to focus (1) on the *class struggle*, (2) the *materialist conception of history*, and (3) *Marxian economics*, or the *law of value* and its corollary theory of *surplus value*, in that order. However, in practice, it is not possible to isolate these principles of Marxian science from one another, for each dovetails into and is interrelated to the others. Our examination of the class struggle has already introduced us to historical materialism and the capitalist exploitation of wage labor. Now that we are about to bring the materialist conception of history into focus we shall also find ourselves observing a succession of class struggles. And we shall note again and again that these conflicts are in each instance "the immediate driving force of history," to borrow the language of Marx and Engels.

In the several lessons that we devote to the materialist conception of history we shall (1) apply historical materialism to various epochs of history, (2) explain how it enables us to perceive in the industrial structure of full-orbed capitalism the social form of the Socialist society aborning, and (3) explain also how historical materialism is used by Socialists as a guide to tactics, to the methods for getting rid of outmoded capitalism.

*

One of the slanderous charges hurled repeatedly against Karl Marx by pulpiteers and other defenders of the capitalist status quo is that Marx preached "materialism," a doctrine they describe as one ascribing all human motivation to desire for material gain. This vulgar debasement of Marx's grand contribution to the understanding of human history in fact describes the capitalists' own grossly materialistic motivations. Indeed, the capitalists exalt their "profit motive" in various specious ways, thereby confirming their own acceptance of the "materialism" they falsely ascribe to Marx. Marx knew the bourgeois well. He knew him as greedy and hypocritical. But the materialist conception of history that Marx discovered and formulated was not inspired by the capitalist's characteristic mercenary behavior; it was a product rather of Marx's critical study of philosophy as well as his examination of the economic foundations and social relations of capitalist society. The result illumines all history.

The essence of Marx's discovery was described by Engels in these words:

The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in man's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the PHILOSOPHY, but in the ECONOMICS of each particular epoch. The growing perception that existing social institutions are unreasonable and unjust, that reason has become unreason, and right wrong, is only proof that in the modes of production and exchange changes have silently taken place, with which the social order, adapted to earlier economic conditions, is no longer in keeping. From this it also follows that the means of getting rid of the incongruities that have been brought to light, must also be present, in a more or less developed condition, within the changed modes of production themselves. These means are not to be invented by deduction from fundamental principles, but are to be discovered in the stubborn facts of the existing system of production. ["Socialism From Utopia to Science"]

Thus we see that in the materialist conception of history Marx discovered the underlying motivating force of history. The class struggle is "the immediate driving force," but it is itself the product of a mode of production that has developed within a given society, and the social relations arising therefrom.

In this sense, Marx's discovery is comparable to Charles Darwin's discovery of natural selection as the key to an understanding of biological evolution. Marx has enabled us to observe each social system, or historical epoch, of the past as though it were a living organism. As a result of the changes in the mode of production "that have silently taken place" in each old society, each new society begins to take shape like an infant in the womb of its mother. As the evolution of the productive instruments continues, the "infant" grows until finally it can grow no further within the limits of the old society. Then comes the time of birth—social revolution. Once established the new society passes through *its* life sequence of infancy, maturity, decay and death. But before death comes it also develops within itself the seeds of the system that will issue from and supersede it.

Thus Marx has enabled us to view human history, not as a succession of static events, but as a con-

tinuous, ever-changing phenomenon. Social growth began with the earliest formation of a crude society by primitive man. For a long time, hundreds of millennia, its growth was imperceptibly slow—for it was only slowly that man's inventive genius emerged. Then, with certain key discoveries (which we shall take note of in Lesson 7) social growth was accelerated. In *historic* times it has been much more rapid, and has been interrupted only by historical periods of retrogression, such as the Dark Ages. Today, the pace of growth and change is breathtaking and, to most people, it is bewildering as well. Yet any literate worker, who really wants to, may, with the aid of Marx's materialist conception of history, cut through the tangle of events and perceive history's main currents.

*

Capitalist historians have not hesitated to crib from Marx in a superficial way. It is noteworthy, however, that their textbooks exclude the vital factor of the class struggle as "the immediate driving force of history." The result is that, while paying lip service to changes in the material foundations of society, they continue to teach what is essentially an idealistic concept of history.

By "idealistic" we do not mean "lofty" or "morally virtuous." We mean a concept of history that ascribes social changes to *ideas*, specifically to the ideas of great historical figures, who are represented as prime movers of history. Hence the capitalist historians account for social changes and historical developments in terms of the timely birth of great men, and ignore or at least subordinate the powerful underlying forces of history. The result is that capitalist historians tend to present history as a succession of static, more or less unconnected episodes. To the bored students such history resolves itself into a hodgepodge of names, dates and places devoid of vital interest that they soon forget.

In his book "Ancient Society" (1877), the American pioneer anthropologist, Lewis Henry Morgan (who developed a materialist conception of history independently of Marx), wrote:

It fortunately so happens that the events of human progress embody themselves, independently of particular men, in a material record, which is crystallized in institutions, usages and customs, and preserved in inventions and discoveries. Historians, from a sort of necessity, give to individuals great prominence in the production of events; thus placing persons, who are transient, in the place of principles, which are enduring. The work of society in its totality, by means of which all progress occurs, is ascribed far too much to individual men, and far too little to the public intelligence. It will be recognized generally that the substance of human history is bound up in the growth of ideas, which are wrought out of the people and expressed in their institutions, usages, inventions and discoveries.

Marx, of course, understood full well the role that "great men" play in history. The point is that, as Marx showed, these strategically placed individuals are themselves the products of historical circumstances. We should not, of course, ignore great men in our study of history. As Karl Kautsky¹ observed in "Foundations of Christianity":

... Individuals can influence society too, and the portrayal of outstanding individuals is indispensable for a complete picture of their time. But in terms of historical epochs, their influence is only transitory, merely the outer ornament which strikes the eye first in a building but says nothing about its foundations.

As for the "timeliness" of the appearance of great men, Engels noted in a letter (Jan. 25, 1894) that this is not fortuitous circumstance, even though the birth of a *particular* man is.

Men make their history themselves, but not as yet with a collective will according to a collective plan, or even in a definite, delimited given society. Their aspirations clash, and for that very reason all such societies are governed by NECESSITY, the complement and form of appearance of which is ACCIDENT. The necessity which here asserts itself athrow all accident is again ultimately economic necessity. This is where the so-called great men come in for treatment. That such and such a man and precisely that man arises at a particular time in a particular country is, of course, pure chance. But cut him out and there will be a demand for a substitute, and this substitute will be found, good or bad, but in the long run he will be found. That Napoleon, just that particular Corsican, should have been the military dictator whom the French Republic, exhausted by its own warfare, had rendered necessary was chance; but that if a Napoleon had been lacking another would have filled the place is proved by the fact that the man was always found as soon as he became necessary: Caesar, Augustus, Cromwell, etc. While Marx discovered the materialist conception of history, Thierry, Mignet, Guizot, and all the English historians up to 1850 are evidence that it was being striven for, and the discovery of the same conception by Morgan proves that the time was ripe for it and that it simply HAD to be discovered.

Men, *with their ideas*, are products of materio-historical circumstances. As Marx summed up this vital point in a memorable passage in his preface to "Critique of Political Economy":

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their so-

¹ Karl Kautsky (1854-1938) was a Marxist who betrayed Marxism and, hence, the workers. He was the author of a large number of important social and historical works, and he was the editor of "Neue Zeit," the theoretical and scholarly organ of the German Social Democratic party. On occasion, Frederick Engels was forced to point to Kautsky's theoretical mistakes and to criticize his conduct as editor of "Neue Zeit." Kautsky fought the "revisionism" of Eduard Bernstein, and then outdid Bernstein in ditching Marxism by providing the excuse needed by the opportunists of the European Socialist parties to accept jobs and State responsibility in capitalist governments. (See the American Preface, by Lucien Sanial, to Karl Marx's "The Paris Commune" for the details and the Socialist Labor Party warning. Kautsky's "justification" for opportunism led to the European Socialists' abandonment of Socialism in favor of class collaboration and the spoils of capitalist office. It also led to the helplessness of the workers during two World Wars and the Nazi terror, and to the success of the "Communist" adventurers in betraying the workers once more.

cial existence determines their consciousness."

What we think, the way we think, are reflexes of materio-historical circumstances. Our minds are mirrors of our socio-economic milieu. One of the phenomena that confirms the validity of this view is the fact that many, many great inventions and scientific discoveries have been made by two or more men at about the same time and independently of each other. Oxygen was discovered independently by two men, Scheele and Priestley, in the same year—1774. Galileo, Fabricius, Scheiner and Harriott discovered sun spots in 1611, all independently. The parallax of a star was measured for the first time in 1838 by *three* men—Bessel, Struve and Henderson. *Five* men—Priestley, Scheele, Lavoisier, Spallancani and Davy — working independently, solved the problem of respiration the same year, 1777. *Eight* or *nine* persons claimed the invention of the telescope and thermometer at about the same time; each did his inventing independently of the others. Mendel's great achievements in genetics were unnoticed for many years, but they were rediscovered by *three* men—deVries, Correns and Tschermak—in a single year, 1900. One could go on indefinitely with examples of multiple simultaneous inventions and discoveries. As recently as July, 1963, two nuclear physicists, one an American, the other a Russian, shared an Atoms for Peace Award. Almost simultaneously, about 20 years ago, in widely separated laboratories, each man developed the concept of "phase stability" that overcame the limitations of the first "atom smashers," the cyclotrons, and led to the development of the far more powerful synchrotrons.

The foregoing is evidence of the forces at work in the economic substructure of society that act on man's sense organs and channel his intellectual activities. But they also determine all political and ideological phenomena, and spiritual life generally. And as the material foundations of society change so do all the manifold elements of man's consciousness.

Thus we see that Marxism is a new way of looking at the history of the past, present and future, at the meaning of life, of nature, of thought; it is a new world view, a new life system.

*

Is "economic determinism" another name for

"materialist conception of history"?

"Economic determinism" is what De Leon called a "trick of rhetoric." It was invented by pseudo-Socialists sometime in the first decade of the present century, apparently as a substitute for Marx's term. But like all such unnecessary substitutes this one carried with it the subtle suggestion that it contained a variation of the old meaning. And since this variation is left to each individual to interpret or supply it is obviously subject to a multitude of confusing definitions. As De Leon wrote in concluding his editorial on "Economic Determinism" (WEEKLY PEOPLE, Oct. 24, 1910):

If "economic determinism" means the identical thing as the "materialist conception of history" then the term is redundant, and rejectable as such; if the term means anything else, then it is rejectable as a darkener of council.

Did Marx attribute ALL historical events and developments to economic causes alone?

No. As Engels wrote in a letter to J. Bloch (see reading assignment below):

According to the materialist conception of history the determining element in history is **ULTIMATELY** the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the **ONLY** determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase.

For an elaboration of Engels's point the student is urged to read *and study* his letter to J. Bloch.

Reading Assignment:

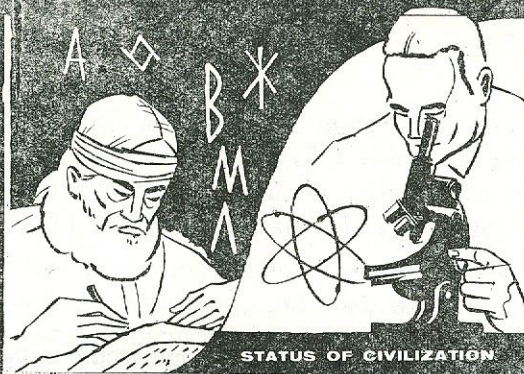
"Crises in European History" by Gustav Bang
Read the two introductions to the American edition (by Arnold Petersen, the translator)
Read Chapter I on "Historical Materialism"
Engels's letter to J. Bloch
(Published as an appendix to Engels's "Socialism From Utopia to Science")

Self-Testing Questions

1. What is the dynamic ("dynamic" meaning the energy or force producing growth and change) factor in society? (Try to set this down in your own words.)
2. Why hasn't society ever become stable, unchanging?
3. Why do social revolutions come about?
4. Why don't we think as our great-grandparents thought?

CIVILIZATION

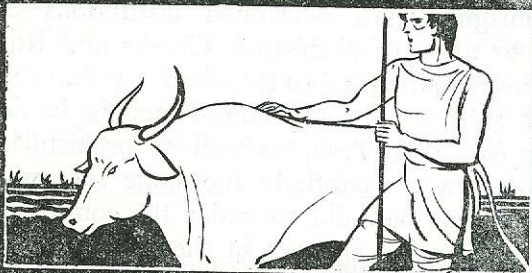
From the invention of a phonetic alphabet, with the use of writing, to the present time. In time, approximately 5,000 years.



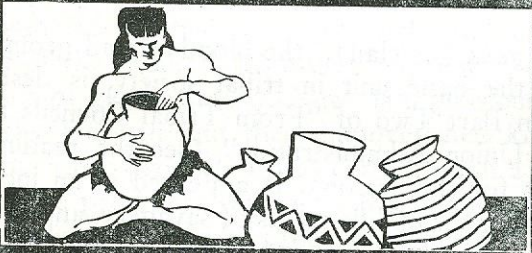
STATUS OF CIVILIZATION



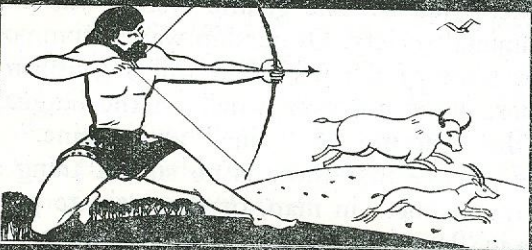
UPPER STATUS



MIDDLE STATUS



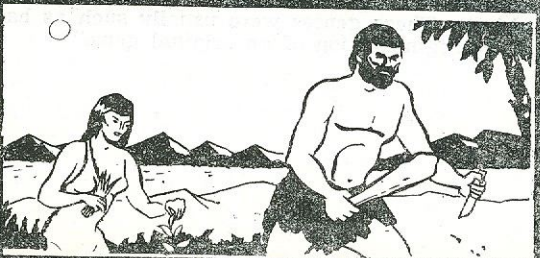
LOWER STATUS



UPPER STATUS



MIDDLE STATUS



LOWER STATUS

BARBARISM

Upper Status: From the invention of the process of smelting iron ore, with the use of iron tools, to the invention of a phonetic alphabet.

Middle Status: From the domestication of animals in the Eastern Hemisphere, and in the Western from the cultivation of maize and plants by irrigation, with the use of adobe brick and stone, to invention of the art of smelting iron ore.

Lower Status: From the invention of the art of pottery to domestication of animals in Eastern Hemisphere and cultivation of plants and maize by irrigation, with use of adobe brick and stone, in the Western. (Pottery presupposes village life. Tribal government based on gentes.)

SAVAGERY

Upper Status: From the invention of the bow and arrow to the invention of pottery. (Gens, as a social institution and unit of government growing out of family organization. Originally, members of a gens were descendants of a common female ancestor.)

Middle Status: From acquisition of a fish subsistence and a knowledge of the use of fire to invention of the bow and arrow.—Very primitive-group marriage-incipient gens.

Lower Status: From infancy of human race to knowledge of the use of fire. Articulate speech, arboreal existence, "picking stage" in seeking food. Stone tools, first improvised, then made. No social organization, although group effort developed out of need in hunting.

7. THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY—PRE-POLITICAL SOCIETY

Hardly anyone any longer believes that man started at the top of the ladder and through the commission of an "original sin" tumbled to the bottom. Our archaeological and ethnological researches have proved conclusively that man started at the very bottom and, by slow and painful degrees, worked his way upward. We have learned something about the earliest phases of his ascent by studying the higher primates. What mainly distinguishes man from these, his closest relatives, is his ability to conceive and make tools. The chimpanzee has been reliably reported to be capable of making a simple tool, such as fitting one piece of bamboo to another in order to get at a bunch of bananas. But such improvisations are carried out with visible reward as incentive. Man alone possesses the power of abstraction—conceptual thought—which is essential for the regular manufacture of tools. Man alone can visualize the tool in a stone that he will chip into a desired shape. That is, man alone is basically the artist in the sense of Aristotle's definition of art, which "consists in the conception of the result to be produced before its realization in the material."

It is important to remind ourselves that man started without even a knowledge of articulate speech. His communication, we assume, was by means of gesture and gabble. Speech had to be invented—and our respect for these, our early ancestors, must grow enormously as we reflect on the difficulty of this intellectual feat. Since verbal language is a great aid to invention—most of our constructive thinking is done in unsounded words — its development marked the beginning of logical thought as well as the communication, hence dissemination, of ideas.

We have not the space here to trace the early technology of man. Moreover, our purpose is to note that each discovery or invention, each conquest over nature, was reflected in changes in the way man lived, and in the social organization that he eventually developed. Lewis Henry Morgan, the American pioneer anthropologist, whose studies were climaxed in his epochal "Ancient Society" — a work every Socialist student should read and master—divided the evolution of man and society into three main stages. They were

(beginning with man as he first evolved) *savagery*, *barbarism* and *civilization*.

These stages, together with their corresponding principal inventions and discoveries, are depicted in the illustration on page 25.

Morgan made a key discovery while studying the institutions of Indians belonging to the Seneca tribe in New York State, one of the tribes banded together in the confederacy of the Iroquois. He discovered that these aborigines had developed institutions almost identical to those of prehistoric Greeks and Romans. Further investigation led to the discovery that the evolution of society among primitive people in Africa, both the Americas, Asia, as well as prehistoric Europeans, followed essentially the same succession of forms, and that they did so under the compulsion of essentially the same changes in the mode of production, or the development of productive techniques and tools.

The *gens* (or clan),¹ the blood-related group that formed the basic unit in tribal society, is described briefly in Part Two of "From Tribal Councils to Industrial Union Administration" (see the reading assignment for this lesson). It appeared in an incipient form during the middle status of savagery, and evolved gradually into the higher form Morgan observed among the Iroquois. The gentile system was a reflex of a communal society. Ownership was in common. Indeed, for most of the period in which gentilism prevailed there were not even words in the language to express the concepts of "mine" and "thine." This, of course, proves that there is no such a thing as an "acquisitive instinct" in man, or that private property has roots in "human nature"—as vulgar apologists for capitalism sometimes argue. Because ownership was in common, interests were in common. Gentile government reflected these common interests.

Democracy functioned freely in the climate of common interests. The council of the gens, the sover-

¹ The plural of "gens" is "gentes." "Gentile" is the adjective. A "phratry" is a brotherhood, and, as Lewis Henry Morgan explained in "Ancient Society," a natural growth from the organization into gentes. "It is an organic union or association of two or more gentes of the same tribe for certain common objects. These gentes were usually such as had been formed by the segmentation of an original gens."

ign power, was a democratic body in which all adult male and female members had a voice and vote. The council elected and deposed its sachems (administrators during peacetime) and its chiefs (war leaders).

During the period when man obtained his living from hunting and fishing, and even when hunting and fishing were supplemented by the cultivation of small plots, he had no use for slaves. Captives taken in wars were usually tortured and killed, although adult females and children were often adopted into the gentes of their captors. But, as agriculture developed into field cultivation, and particularly where metal tools were introduced, captives were put to work as slaves to till the fields. For the metal tools, which raised productivity substantially, had made it possible for society to support a number of specialists—smiths, masons, tanners, etc. These new techniques required, not only a surplus from agriculture, but also a consolidation of the plots held by individual clansmen. Now, as already noted, instead of killing captives taken in war they were put to work in the fields.

A primary class division appeared—masters and slaves.

Simultaneously, but over centuries of time, the concept of property gradually took root. The idea grew with the accumulation of wealth, and each expansion of the property institution put new strains on the bonds of gentile society. New class divisions arose—wealthy freemen and their impoverished kinsmen. Formerly, when production was carried on in a simple manner, the producers controlled their own products. But the advent of private property in herds of cattle and articles of luxury, etc., led to an exchange between individuals, to the transformation of products into commodities. "Here is the root of the entire revolution that followed," said Engels. "When the producers did no longer consume their own product, but released their hold of it in exchange for another's product, they lost control of it."

In "Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," a work based in part on Morgan's researches and discoveries (and one that should also be studied closely by the Socialist student), Engels wrote:

How the State gradually developed by partly transforming the organs of the gentile constitution, partly replacing them by new organs and finally installing real State authorities; how the place of the nation in arms defending itself through its gentes, phratries and tribes, was taken by an armed public

power of coercion in the hands of these authorities and available against the mass of the people; nowhere can we observe the first act of this drama so well as in ancient Athens.

The transformation is described in Part Three of "From Tribal Councils to Industrial Union Administration." Suffice it here to point out that gentile institutions, which arose on a foundation of classless primitive communism, were shaken as by an earthquake when society became class divided and rested on a foundation of private property.

When common interests were replaced by private interests and class antagonisms, institutions that were designed to serve common interests became an anachronism. Yet it was only gradually that they yielded to new forms of governmental institutions that reflected the changed material conditions. What the owners of property, now a ruling class, needed was a government that would protect their property interests and hold in subjugation both the propertyless freemen and the slaves. Lo! The political State!

Although in Athens (and elsewhere, too) some of the gentile institutions were partly transformed into organs of the State, the latter is an entirely different concept of government. This is evident in the following comparisons:

	Gentile	Political
1. Government based on:	Kinship groups: gens, phratry, tribe	Territorial units
2. Armed forces:	Armed population, controlled by gentes	Special forces, responsible to State officials
3. Function of government:	Administration of collective affairs; useful role in production	Government over people; protection of property
4. Complementary society:	Classless and communal	Class-divided and private property

Reading Assignment:

"From Tribal Councils to Industrial Union Administration" (Parts One, Two and Three)

Self-Testing Questions

1. How did the classless and communal character of primitive society influence the governmental structure?
2. What brought about the downfall of gentile society?
3. How did the growth of commerce and trade affect the gentile system?
4. What does the fact that the Athenians called the territorial unit of their new political organization a "tribe" suggest?

8. THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY—THE SLAVE ECONOMY OF ANCIENT ROME

The rise and decline of the Roman Empire offers an excellent opportunity to apply the materialist conception of history. By studying the material basis of Roman society we may not only understand the transformations that occurred in Roman political institutions but also the *ideas* that were characteristic of each phase in the evolution of the mode of production. Here we shall concern ourselves with the consequences of changes in the mode of production on concepts, ideas, social attitudes.

"The basis of the mode of production of the countries comprising the Roman Empire," wrote Karl Kautsky in "Foundations of Christianity," "was agriculture; crafts and trading were much less important. Production for self-consumption still predominated; commodity production, production for sale, was still slightly developed. Craftsmen and merchants often had farms as well that were in close connection with their domestic establishments; their work went principally toward producing for their households. The farm supplied provisions for the kitchen and raw materials such as flax, wool, leather, wood, from which the members of the family themselves made clothes, house furnishings and tools. It was only the surplus, if there was any, over and above the needs of the household that was sold."

Even on the larger estates, slaves worked beside masters. This daily association brought them closer together as human beings. Often the clever slave was regarded by the master as a full-fledged friend. This is the way the German historian, Karl Jentsch, described the slave-master relationship of this period:

It should not be thought that the shocking legal conception of slavery was taken literally in private life and that the slave was not considered or treated as a human being; up to the end of the First Punic War [264-241 B.C.] the slaves were not too badly off. What was said with respect to the legal power of the master of the house over his wife and children applies to slaves too. His power was legally unlimited, but religion, custom, reason, feeling and interest put limits to it; and the man that the law regarded as a salable object, subject to his master's caprice without any protection, was valued on the farm as a faithful fellow-worker and at home as a member of the household, with whom one chatted cozily after work before the fireplace.

Kautsky, who quoted Jentsch, added this note:

This kind of slavery was one of the mildest known forms of exploitation. But it changed in aspect when it came to serve

money-making, as labor on great enterprises distinct from the master's household.

The first such enterprise must have been mines. In the mining and refining of minerals, especially copper, gold and silver, slaves in large numbers were exploited mercilessly and literally worked to death. The reason: They no longer produced consumption goods for limited personal and household use; they worked to make money for their masters. As Kautsky put it:

They did not work so that he [the master] might use marble or sulphur, iron or copper, gold or silver in his household, but so that he might sell the products of the mine and get money for it, that commodity with which one can buy everything, all the pleasures, all the power that one can never have enough of. Now as much work was squeezed out of the miners as was possible, for the more work they did the more money their owner got. Moreover, they were fed and clothed as badly as possible, for their food and clothing had to be bought, money had to be given up for the purpose, since the slaves in the mines did not produce those things themselves. The proprietor of a rich household had no other outlet for his surplus food and consumption-goods than to provide them for his slaves and guests; but now, under commodity production, the more money the enterprise earned, the less the slaves consumed. The bigger the enterprise became, the worse their lot was; increasingly they were detached from the household, kept in barracks that contrasted sternly with the luxury of the master's dwelling. All personal relationships between master and slaves were lost, not only because of the separation of their place of work from his residence, but also because of the numbers involved . . . The slave's total absence of rights was now a fearful scourge.

When slaves worked beside their masters they were regarded as human beings. But with the transformation in the mode of production, the image of slaves in the minds of the masters became that of so many cattle devoid of human attributes. What is equally remarkable is the degeneration of the slaves' image of themselves. When they were members of patriarchal households they often preferred their status to freedom, particularly if the households were rich. But in the later Roman period, degradation and dehumanization led the slave laborers to regard themselves as something below the human species and to look upon their masters as inherently superior, even as gods. Thus the mode of production in material life conditions our concepts of ourselves and our exploiters.

The technology of the mining industry dictated large-scale operations by slave labor. Similarly with other branches of production that came after mining. As cities became larger and richer, the need arose for

sewers, aqueducts, public baths, temples, theaters and other public edifices, and in some cases, fortified walls. These were constructed by building contractors using armies of slave laborers.

The growth of cities provided markets for food-stuffs, and this was an incentive for the creation of latifundia, the great landed estates that were created by despoiling public lands and dispossessing ruined farmers, and that were also run by armies of slaves.

Now even the purpose of war had undergone a change. Once the capture of slaves was incidental in war. Now it was a primary objective. Ironically, the farmers whose small holdings were combined into the large estates were dispossessed by being so frequently forced to leave their plows to wage wars—wars they supposed were for the “defense” of the State, or for some other patriotic purpose, but which in reality were for plunder that would benefit only the Roman rulers.

(In the Hellenic world, but not in the Roman, slaves were also assembled in workshops for the manufacture of commodities.)

In “Capital” Karl Marx observes that the secret history of Rome “is the history of its landed property.” Lands acquired by conquest became a bone of ferocious contention among the Roman rulers, the most powerful of whom owned numerous huge estates. Each of these required ever more cheap slave labor to operate—and this need in turn led to more wars for the capture of more slaves, and for the conquest of more land.

This “economy of conquest” was shot through with contradictions, one of which was the fact that it destroyed the very element it required to plunder foreign lands—the farmer-soldiers. The farmers were Rome’s best soldier material. Farmers had the physical capacity to endure military hardship. And they were “free Romans”—which is to say, they were easily deluded by appeals to patriotism. But when the Roman farmers were dispossessed of their lands and forced into the cities, there to become an idle proletariat, supported by the handouts of the State, they and their descendants became more and more unfit for service in war. The citizen militia that once comprised the mighty Roman legions had more and more to be augmented with professional soldiers, riff-raff and vagabonds. Finally, barbarian mercenaries from conquered provinces—enemies of Rome—had to be hired to serve as the “backbone” of the Roman armies!

As Roman soldiers became fewer and costlier the attitude toward war changed. From being glorified it was regarded more and more as an evil to be avoided when possible. Pressures grew to reserve Roman troops for duty in guarding the boundaries of Rome. The

turning tide of Roman conquest coincides with the life of Jesus and the reign of Tiberius. The Roman imperialist offensive, in effect, came to a standstill. Thereafter, the Empire had to concentrate on fighting off barbarian enemies pressing in on its peripheries. As a result, the flow of captive slaves to Rome practically ceased and slave breeding had to be depended upon more and more. But slave breeding was an expensive procedure, too expensive to supply the armies of slaves required for the latifundia economy. Even many of the mines had to close. And the owners of large landed estates could continue only by turning sections of their properties into small farms. These they let out to tenants, *coloni*, on the condition that the tenants contribute a part of their labor power to the master’s house estates. This was the origin of the system that became the basis of labor exploitation in feudal times.

But this reform, which finally collapsed, could not save Rome. Corruption to an unimaginable degree had infected every aspect of Roman life. The only purpose for living among the owners of the latifundia and their parasitic hangers-on was pleasure. “. . . man,” wrote Kautsky, “becomes indifferent to any stimulus that works on him constantly, to joy and to pain, to pleasure and to the fear of death. Mere unbroken enjoyment, uninterrupted by any work or struggle, produced at first a constant pursuit of new pleasures that would surpass the old ones and stimulate the jaded nerves once more. This led to the most unnatural vices, the most intricate cruelties, as well as to extravagance on the largest and most senseless scale.”

This degeneracy was epitomized in the Roman circuses, gory spectacles with which the effete Roman rulers entertained themselves and the restless proletarian masses. From time to time there was a revulsion against the emptiness, brutality and senselessness of the “Roman way of life.” The great revolt of slaves led by the slave-gladiator, Spartacus (40-70 B.C.), which was joined by large number of freemen, was one such manifestation. But the rot was much too far advanced to be checked. In the reign of Emperor Trajan (52-120 A.D.) a gladiatorial orgy was staged that lasted 123 days and took 10,000 lives.

The new mode of production based on exploitation of the *coloni* failed to stem the decline of the Roman economy. This decline began when expansion, conquest and plunder practically ceased. Roman industry had always been crude, as industry based on chattel slave labor must necessarily be. It was devoted principally to producing luxury goods for consumption. And when the income of the owners of latifundia and mines declined, so did the production of urban industries.

The decay in urban life led to a decline of urban population as well. The ranks of the *coloni* were thinned by starvation. Large areas of latifundia, as Dio Chrysostom (born about 50 A.D.) said in his seventh oration, lie "desert, because we take no care of it and have too small a population."

But while the population declined, and grew poorer, the burdens of militarism grew greater. When wealth flowed into Rome from conquest, the State had not found it burdensome to maintain a great military establishment while simultaneously it lavished wealth on huge edifices that were used not only for luxury, but for religion and hygiene. Canals and roads were constructed on a massive scale. But now, with the empire weakened, public works fell into decay and "colossal constructions became colossal ruins." (Kautsky.)

The mounting expenses of militarism completed the general ruin. Everyone sought to shift the burden to more defenseless shoulders. At the bottom, the *coloni* were squeezed mercilessly. Coercive laws which proliferated under Emperor Diocletian (245-313 A.D.) fastened the *coloni* to the soil, thus completing their legal transformation into bondsmen.

The militarists and the State bureaucracy aroused opposition and hostility against themselves even among the exploiters in whose interests they presumably functioned. As hostility to the State grew, more and more Romans tended to welcome the invading barbarians, regarding them as saviors. Salvian, a Christian writer (born about 400 or 405 A.D.), said in his book "*De gubernatione dei*":

A large part of Gaul and Spain is already Gothic, and all the Romans who live there have only one wish, not to become Romans again. I should only wonder that there were any poor and needy people that did not go over to them, were it not that they cannot leave their possessions and families behind. And we Romans wonder that we cannot defeat the Goths, when we Romans prefer living under them to living with each other.

Thus the social system based on chattel slavery arose, decayed and died. Bourgeois accounts make of it an enormously complicated story in which personalities play such stellar roles that the real dynamic forces, to which the Catalines, Gracchi and Caesars reacted, are meaningless shapes in the background. But historical materialism gives it continuity and equips us with the means for understanding *why* Rome became the scourge of the ancient world, and *why* it fell into decay and ruin.

Reading Assignment:

- "Crises in European History" by Gustav Bang
(Chapter 2, "The Rise of Christianity")
"From Tribal Councils to Industrial Union Administration"
(Part 4)

Self-Testing Questions

1. What were some of the characteristics of slavery in its inception?
2. What were the main incentives for the policy of conquest?
3. How did slavery hold back technological progress?
4. What was it in material conditions that explained the great religious urge that possessed the oppressed?
5. What evidence is there to support the claim that Christianity was a religion of the proletariat in the beginning?
6. How did Christian communism reflect material conditions?

9. THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY—CAPITALIST ORIGINS

We are not, at this time, studying *history*; we are studying the *materialist conception of history*. We are using history to illustrate a principle and explain the underlying forces that, once understood, illumine all historical epochs. It is interesting to note that Marx himself did not spin out lengthy philosophical dissertations on the materialist conception of history. "Philosophers," he wrote in his last thesis on Feuerbach, an early exercise, "have interpreted the world differently, but what matters is to change it." Instead of writing philosophical dissertations, Marx devoted himself to exemplary applications of historical materialism. As for the principle itself, Marx wrote in his preface to "Critique of Political Economy":

[This] may be briefly summed up as follows: In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed.

All of history does not represent "progress." On the contrary, an old society may break down before the new is ready to emerge. Then, instead of mankind moving to a higher plane, there is a period of retrogression such as the Dark Ages which stretched from the fall of Rome to the latter Middle Ages. The Dark Ages were characterized by incessant and universal war. Barbarian tribes seeking to establish themselves on the land of Western Europe were caught up in a turbulence that absorbed all their energies. It was an epoch of intellectual stultification in which technological progress practically ceased. The very term that was given to this chaotic period by the orthodox historians—Dark Ages—is a tacit confirmation of the validity of the materialist conception of history. For

when technological progress ceased the social relations became temporarily frozen.

But society could not survive, even in turbulence, without food. And this elemental need led to the creation of a system of militarism based on landed tenure. Thus Jenks wrote in "Law and Politics in Middle Ages" that "to pursue agriculture one must occupy land; to rule agriculturalists, one must rule through the land. Feudalism expressed itself through land-holding; it was a military service with land as the reward of service."

To till the soil the agriculturalists had to be protected against armed bands and given a haven in the castle. On their part, the tillers of the soil owed both labor and military service to their feudal protector. As Paul Lafargue explained in "Evolution of Property":

The system, in its essence, is a compact of reciprocal services; the feudal lord only holds his land and possesses a claim on the labor and harvests of his tenants and vassals on condition of doing suit and service to his superiors and lending aid to his dependents. On accepting the oath of fealty and homage the lord engaged to protect his vassal against all and sundry by all the means at his command; in return for which support the vassal was bound to render military and personal service and make certain payments to his lord. The latter, in his turn, for the sake of protection, commended himself to a more puissant feudal lord, who himself stood in the relation of vassalage to a suzerain, to the king or emperor.

The spirit of reciprocal duty pervaded all of feudal society—just as the lust for profit pervades capitalism. And everything possible was done to impress this sense of duty on all minds, the powerful and the weak. Popular poetry exalted duty into a religion. The lives of men were gripped by it and they could not conceive of any other way of life.

The economic system that corresponded to this social relationship was one of production for use. That is, everything produced on the feudal domain was consumed there. This logically placed limits on the exactions of the feudal lords. They had no incentive to take from their serfs and artisan-retainers more than was needed for themselves and their followers.

But however stable feudal society *seemed*—today the bourgeoisie looks back on feudal "stability" with envy—the mode of production nevertheless gradually underwent changes. For one thing, the feudal overlord tended to shake off the duties he owed his serfs and vassals, and simultaneously to exact dues and obliga-

tions that, originally, were recompense for services he had rendered. Many serfs fled the domains of their lords and took refuge beneath castle walls on other domains. Towns were formed. Artisans set up shops in which they produced commodities, articles for sale. Thus we observe the beginnings of a new mode of production and exchange.

Meanwhile the Crusades, organized both to plunder the Saracens and to serve as an outlet for growing social discontent, had established commercial contacts with the East. When crusaders returned from the Near East with silks, satins, spices, and other luxuries, it was not long before the feudal class of Europe cultivated appetites that they could satisfy only with—money. Formerly they had no incentive to take more of the product of their serfs and vassals than was needed to provision the castle and equip retainers. But now the lords' need for money led to their dropping all restraint. They doubled, trebled, quadrupled their exactions. Serfdom became increasingly intolerable. There were mass serf revolts while more and more of the oppressed, tied to the land by feudal law, fled to take refuge in the towns.

In the "Communist Manifesto" Marx wrote: "But every class struggle is a political struggle." That is, every conflict between ruled and ruling classes inevitably culminates in a struggle for control of the public powers. Thus the burghers who populated the towns of the Middle Ages waged a struggle, first against their immediate feudal overlords, to obtain a measure of political autonomy in the "burghs." They formed communes—chartered towns. Trade within the towns stimulated invention, expansion of production of commodities, and led to an increase of trade *between* towns. But here commerce encountered more feudal obstacles—imposts, fees and tolls charged by feudal lords over whose territories the traders were compelled to pass. Often the latter were thrown into castle dungeons, tortured and held for ransom.

A political struggle aiming for local autonomy was expanded into a regional struggle. As Dr. Bang notes in "Crises in European History," two developments in material life were of tremendous help to the burgher class in overcoming stubborn feudal resistance. One was the revolution in military technology wrought by the invention of gunpowder. The other, the development in the second half of the 15th century of the art of typographical printing.

Gunpowder and hand-firearms were more than an equalizer. They rapidly rendered ineffective the once almighty armored-knight cavalry of the nobility and gave the advantage to mass armies of foot soldiers.

The latter the burghers were capable of organizing—or hiring.

As for the art of printing, it broke the monopoly on literary knowledge of the Roman Church and was a key factor in an immense renaissance. Combined with simultaneous advances in the arts of ocean navigation, leading to the discovery of the Americas and a trade route to India—developments that greatly expanded the European's intellectual horizon—it excited a rebellious spirit that kept up a relentless pressure on the citadels of feudal power.

The same compelling forces, growing out of the expansion of manufacture and trade, required the burgher class—now the bourgeoisie—to wage a struggle for control of the nation, for the destruction, that is, of a State and legal system that fostered the interests of a parasitic, prodigal and socially useless nobility. These forces culminated in the bourgeois revolutions, violent upheavals that dispossessed and destroyed the feudal class.

Here it becomes evident that revolution is not, as many capitalist apologists argue today, the antithesis of evolution. Indeed, the contrary is true. Revolution is the culmination of evolution. It is like the hatching of a chick which throughout the incubation period has "evolved" within the shell. For 21 days the process of cellular growth and replication transforms the fertilized ovum into a creature of defined organs for whom, within the shell, there is no more room for growth. He must break the shell and emerge—or die. And so it is with the new social system that has evolved within the "shell" of the old. By revolution it must break through that shell—or die.

But if social evolution proceeds in this fashion, with the class making the revolution acting unconsciously in response to the stimulus of economic necessity, indeed acting in the belief that its motivations are ideological, of what use is a mastery of historical materialism?

The answer is self-evident. It is first to avert failure, social retrogression, a new Dark Ages. Secondly, it is to shorten and ease the birthpangs.

To make the point another way, historical materialism, a knowledge of the causal forces of social change, brings our intelligence into juxtaposition with the historic situation. It makes of our brains—the brains of the working class—a mighty catalyst of social development.

Reading Assignment:

"Crises in European History" by Gustav Bang
(Chapter 3, "The Reformation" and Chapter 4,
"The French Revolution")

"From Tribal Council to Industrial Union Government"

(Part 6)

Self-Testing Questions

1. How did the development of world trade doom the old medieval society?
2. Why did the welter of revolts churned up by feudal conditions focus on the Catholic Church?
3. Name at least three (four, if you can) specific materialistic "gripes" the burghers had against the Church?
4. What were some of the "privileges" enjoyed by the feudal nobility that injured the interests of the bourgeoisie?
5. What did the bourgeoisie, who proclaimed "liberty, fraternity, equality," fear of the proletariat once power was in their hands?
6. What was the historic reason for "Bonapartism"?

10. THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY—SOCIALIST ORIGINS

Just as the capitalist historians exaggerate the roles of "great men" when explaining historical events, so they exaggerate the role of individuals in propounding ideologies. For example, according to the capitalist historians, the ideology of the working class, which is embodied in the principles of Socialist science, was conceived in the brain of "a German Jew named Karl Marx." The inference they invite is that, had it not been for Marx, society would not now have to deal with the "menace" of Socialism. Some go so far as to mention the carbuncles from which Marx suffered, and the miseries arising from his poverty and family tragedies, as having influenced and made more "virulent" the ideas they blame for so much of the world's present turbulence and unrest.

But it was precisely Marx's discovery that "ideas," *his own included*, were the result of historical development, the cause of which lies *outside* of man, that raised him to the eminence of greatness. That is, material conditions in Europe in the mid-19th century, changes in the mode of production and exchange that had rapidly evolved once the bourgeoisie had overthrown the feudal class and ended its system of land tenure, had created economic conditions, class relationships, and a political climate in which scientific Socialist ideas *had* to be discovered—just as, in the late 15th century, historical conditions, growth of trade, development of the navigational arts (cartography, invention of the quadrant, etc.), the New World *had* to be discovered. No one would seriously argue that had Columbus turned back when his frightened crew urged him to, without reaching the Americas' off-shore islands, these continents would have long remained undiscovered. By the same token, had Marx been less devoted to science, had he possessed less character and capacity for personal sacrifice—in short, had Marx been tempted to pursue a bourgeois career in which his great mind would have been absorbed in money grubbing, another gifted genius would have made the discoveries that placed the Socialist movement on a scientific foundation.

Our task is to understand the historic conditions out of which, with the aid of Marx's genius, the ideas of scientific Socialism arose. Our review must necessarily be brief, but then our purpose is not to provide a

history, but merely to guide our readers in a study of the *materialist conception of history*.

In the burghs of the Middle Ages production was carried on by guilds—organizations that were the quintessence of exclusiveness. Each guild had an absolute monopoly to manufacture and sell its particular product or products. The number of journeymen and apprentices a guildmaster could employ and the conditions of their employment were strictly prescribed. "The rules of the guilds," Marx wrote in "Capital," ". . . by limiting most strictly the number of apprentices and journeymen that a single master could employ, prevented him from becoming a capitalist. Moreover, he could not employ his journeymen in any other handicraft than the one in which he was a master. The guilds zealously repelled every encroachment by the capital of merchants, the only form of free capital with which they came in contact. A merchant could buy every kind of commodity, but labor as a commodity he could not buy."

Right here we have a clue to a condition absolutely prerequisite to the establishment of capitalist production—the existence of a class of "free" laborers whose labor power the owners of capital could purchase. This is the way Marx put it in Chapter XXVI, "The Secret of Primitive Accumulation," in "Capital":

In themselves, money and commodities are no more capital than are the means of production and of subsistence. They want transforming into capital. But this transformation itself can only take place under certain circumstances that center in this, viz., that two very different kinds of commodity possessors must come face to face and into contact; on the one hand, the owners of money, means of production, means of subsistence, who are eager to increase the sum of values they possess, by buying other people's labor power; on the other hand, free laborers, the sellers of their own labor power, and therefore the sellers of labor. Free laborers, in the double sense that neither they themselves form part and parcel of the means of production, as in the case of slaves, bondsmen, &c., nor do the means of production belong to them, as in the case of peasant proprietors . . . The capitalist system presupposes the complete separation of the laborers from all property in the means by which they can realize their labor.

In England, as Marx also relates in "Capital," a class of "free" laborers was created when the bands of feudal retainers who, as Sir James Steuart put it, "everywhere uselessly filled house and castle," were broken up. But this beginning in the creation of a proletariat was tremendously augmented when there was a sharp rise in Flemish wool manufacture and a corre-

sponding rise in the price of wool in England. This provided an incentive to the nobility to undertake a massive and brutal eviction of their tenants and the transformation of arable land into sheep walks. The expropriated peasants, without the means to produce a living in the country, swarmed into the towns, there to become grist for the mills of capitalist exploitation.

Capitalist production broke the bonds of guild restrictions. In place of monopoly privileges it introduced competition and, with competition, the incentive to improve the mode of production and thereby the more efficient exploitation of wage labor. Division of labor within the workshop greatly increased labor productivity. But it was not until the machine was invented, and the tool taken out of the hands of the worker and placed in a mechanism, that labor productivity began its leaping upward climb. The number of tools a handcraftsman could wield simultaneously was limited by the number of his bodily organs. "The number of tools that a machine can bring into play simultaneously is from the very first emancipated from the organic limits that hedge in the tools of a handcraftsman." (Marx)

With the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and the simultaneous immense growth in the productivity of labor, the misery of the workers greatly increased. The Great French Revolution, a climax in the bourgeoisie's long struggle to destroy feudal power and raise itself to the role of *the* ruling class, had been welcomed by the workers. It had promised "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality"—words that, to the workers, meant something quite different from what they meant to the capitalists. To the capitalists "liberty" meant freedom of competition, "liberty" to exploit wage labor without restraint. "Fraternity" was a mere catchword. And "Equality" was equality before the law, an equality described satirically by Anatole France when he said "The law, in its majestic equality, forbids all men to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread—the rich as well as the poor." Even before the revolution ended the proletariat experienced profound disillusionment. The capitalists, filled with fear of this new force, took refuge in dictatorship—the military dictatorship of Napoleon.

These earth-shaking developments were meanwhile having profound effects on the thoughts and beliefs of men. The Revolution had promised a reign of reason and an era of peace. Instead, there was a chaos of conflicting interests, especially conflicting interests between capitalists and workers, and endless wars of conquest. It was in this climate of disillusionment, when the antagonism between the oppressors and oppressed emerged into the open, that the Utopian Socialists appeared.

The three great Utopians were Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen.¹ As Frederick Engels notes in "Socialism From Utopia to Science," not one of them came forth as a representative of the interests of the proletariat. Nevertheless their brilliant criticism of bourgeois conditions and relations shattered bourgeois pretenses and brought the reality of capitalist despotism into the open. Owen went much farther. He spent the fortune he had accumulated as England's most successful factory manager in an attempt to establish a Utopian communist colony in Indiana. When he returned to England he played a role in creating the first *class* organization of the British workers.

At the same time, in Germany, a brilliant classical philosopher, G.F.W. Hegel, developed a system in which, for the first time, he represented the whole world of nature, of history and of the mind as a *process*. That is, Hegel first applied the laws of dialectic to history. But "with him," as Marx noted, "it [dialectic] is standing on its head." Hegel viewed the real world, which he recognized as constantly in a process of growth and change, as the product, or phenomenal form, of the mind, the human brain. This idealization of history by Hegel had the effect of shrouding his sound use of dialectics in mystification. Hegel saw "the Idea," as the real source of change, the maker of the real world, so to speak. Marx turned the dialectic right side up. Marx was not scornful of Hegel. "I . . . openly avowed myself the pupil of that mighty thinker," he wrote in his second preface to "Capital." But Marx saw that the real world was not the product of the Idea; the Idea, on the contrary, was the product of the real world. "With me," said Marx, ". . . the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected in the human mind, and translated into forms of thought."

From this point on, Marx concentrated on his examination of the real world, on the real nature and relations of capitalist production. A dialectic view of history led to a rounded exposition of historical materialism. Marx's great mind continued to reflect historical reality as he undertook a critical examination of political economy. Here he revealed the *modus operandi*—the actual means—of capitalist exploitation of wage labor. But he did more. He laid bare the contradictions within the capitalist system and proved beyond peradventure that capitalism contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction.

¹ Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Charles Fourier (1772-1837) and Robert Owen (1771-1858) were the greatest of the Utopian Socialists. Frederick Engels's "Socialism From Utopia to Science" traces the evolution of Socialist thought from Utopianism to the science of Marxism.

This is an area we shall examine in future lessons when we deal with Marxian economics. Here it suffices to clinch the point with which we began. The body of ideas and knowledge that we call scientific Socialism, or Marxism, which while *formulated* by Marx, *had its origin* in the material facts of production of capitalist society.

*

What is the meaning of Marxian dialectic?

Hegel formulated the dialectical process as one that proceeds from thesis to antithesis (or contradiction) and finally to synthesis, and to a repetition of the sequence, as stages in the development of both human history and natural history.

Wherever "Marxism" is taught in capitalist colleges this formulation is propounded more or less as the *alpha* and *omega* of "dialectics." It is no wonder therefore that college students emerge from this course with nothing more than a smattering of ignorance of Marxism. Marxism appears to them as a kind of mechanistic rittal; they become easily convinced of its obsolescence.

It is not easy to give a *brief* definition of Marxian dialectic. It is, of course, a process implying evolution, continuous and endless interaction of cause and effect, that operates in nature and in human history. Frederick Engels left an unfinished manuscript for a book that he had entitled "The Dialectics of Nature." With Darwin's discoveries, Engels wrote, "the new conception of

nature was complete in its main features; all rigidity was dissolved, all fixity dissipated, all particularity that had been regarded as eternal became transient, the whole of nature shown as moving in eternal flux and cyclical course."

In precisely the same way did Marx view society and human history—dialectically. To grasp the process is not merely to see society in evolution, in flux, in constant change, but to perceive the interaction of antagonistic forces in any specific period in history. "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in which Marx examined the rise of France's 19th century "sawdust Caesar," Louis Bonaparte, is a classic application of the dialectic method.

Reading Assignment:

- "Crises in European History" by Gustav Bang
(Chapter 4, "The French Revolution";
Chapter 5, "Socialism Foreshadowed";
Chapter 6, "The Rise of Capitalism.")
- "From Tribal Councils to Industrial Union Administration"
(Part 6)
- "Socialism From Utopia to Science" by Frederick Engels
(Chapter 1, "Utopian Socialism";
Chapter 2, "The Materialist Conception of History.")

Self-Testing Questions

1. Why were some sections of the bourgeoisie ultraconservative at the time of the French Revolution?
2. What was the significance of the capture of the Bastille?
3. How did the "promise" of the French Revolution compare with post-revolution reality?
4. What was the "Luddite" movement and why was it foredoomed to fail?
5. What role did the Utopian Socialists play?
6. How did Marx turn Hegel's dialectic "right side up"?

11. THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY—SOCIALIST GOAL

One of the truly great works of Socialist literature is Daniel De Leon's "Two Pages From Roman History," a work that deserves to be reread again and again. Here the foremost Marxist of the 20th century utilized historical materialism and the Marxian dialectic to warn the working class of dangerous pitfalls ahead and to stress the crucial importance of applying intelligence to the task of transforming society. In no previous period in human history has the intellect counted for so much, for in no previous period has a class been called upon to carry out a revolution (to paraphrase De Leon) that was pivoted on so complicated a synthesis, and one withal whose essence was so easily obscured by the ruling class.

In earlier lessons in this series on historical materialism we have learned that what goes on in the human brain is stimulated by the outside world, that the ideas of a generation are a reflex of material reality, and that as the material world changes, as the mode of production and exchange evolves, bringing into being changed social and class relationships, ideas, the ways people think, also change. But now we must focus on another aspect of the dialectic process. For, while changes in material conditions alter the thinking of men, men, acting on thought, bring about changes in their social environment, destroy outmoded class relationships, and build institutions befitting the changed mode of production.

This is not merely to say that those who are in the forefront of today's revolutionary movement must summon to their cause all the intelligence they can command; such hard thinking by Socialists, of course, is important, nay, absolutely vital. But, because of the unique nature of the revolution impending, the mass of workers must also achieve a degree of understanding of the issues involved. "The time is past for revolutions carried through by small minorities at the head of unconscious masses," wrote Frederick Engels in his 1895 introduction to Marx's "Class Struggles in France." "When it gets to be a matter of the complete transformation of the social organization, the masses themselves must participate, must understand what is at stake and why they are to act."

This was also the essence of De Leon's message in "Two Pages From Roman History." The so-called

"Communists" look upon the mass of workers as a force to be enticed, won over in any way they can be won over, even at the cost of fostering dangerous reform illusions, and manipulated by Communist "leaders" when the hour for revolution is ripe. But then the objective of the "Communists" is not a classless, Stateless Socialist Commonwealth; it is a bureaucratic dictatorship, replete with such accouterments of exploitation and class rule as the wage system and the State. However, if the objective is bona fide Socialism, a society in which the workers will indeed have a democratic mastery of their tools and products, the mass of workers must be intelligent actors in the revolution, not puppets to be led this way or that by a self-appointed elite. In De Leon's words:

The proletarian army of emancipation cannot consist of a dumb driven herd. The very idea is a contradiction in terms.

Here we must guard against another danger. This is the danger of what De Leon called "a mechanical, schabloned [carbon copy] style of reasoning." The Socialist must never forget that what was true of the past is equally true of the present—*conditions are changing constantly*, especially socio-economic conditions.

Merely to assert the soundness of a Socialist proposition, dogmatically and mechanically, proves nothing. None of the great Socialist thinkers ever did this. De Leon, for example, summoned day-to-day evidence from the contemporary socio-economic-political scene to prove to the hilt the validity of the Socialist program he formulated. And so must we today in reaffirming the continued validity of this same program.

In formulating the Socialist Industrial Union program, De Leon gave us an example of the application of Marx's materialist conception of history to American conditions, to conditions, that is, in which industrial production was in full efflorescence and the capitalist State had achieved its classical republican form. In this connection, it should be recalled that Marx and Engels, while enunciating principles on which Socialist society would be reared, and while delineating its character, never gave us a clear picture of the structure of Socialist institutions. This task was left to one who could view the problem from the higher historical vantage point that industrialized America afforded, the great social architect, Daniel De Leon.

Do not imagine that De Leon sat down with Marx's books and through a process of sheer intellectual concentration conceived the Socialist Industrial Union program. The actual process, far more gradual than this suggests, was one that synthesized a profound understanding of Marx's materialist conception of history with experience gained as a participant and close observer of the class struggle as it developed over more than a decade under highly industrialized conditions.

Marx had taught that ". . . the present system . . . engenders the *material conditions* and the *social forms* necessary for an economic reconstruction of society." He had also shown that the political State—a government based on territory and maintaining coercive organs (police, jails, armies, etc.) that were at the disposal of ruling classes—would have no place in classless Socialist society. The State, as Engels wrote in "Socialism From Utopia to Science," "dies out." (Note, Engels did not say it "withers away" as has been wrongly stated; he said "*Der Staat . . . stirbt ab*"—the State *dies out*.) Engels continued:

. . . the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production.

Following this reasoning, De Leon took the next logical step. He perceived that administration of a vast, complicated, interrelated system of industrial production would require a government based squarely on industry itself—an industrial government. This was the specific social form the present system had engendered.

De Leon's conceptual thinking matured rapidly early in the first decade of the present century. And in 1904, in his classic address, "The Burning Question of Trades Unionism," he could present this summary:

Civilized society will know no such ridiculous thing as geographic constituencies. It will know only industrial constituencies. The parliament of civilization in America will consist, not of Congressmen from geographic districts, but of representatives of trades throughout the land, and their legislative work will not be the complicated one which a society of conflicting interests, such as capitalism, requires but the easy one which can be summed up in the statistics of the wealth needed, the wealth producible, and the work required—and that any average set of workingmen's representatives are fully able to ascertain, infinitely better than our modern rhetoricians in Congress.

The next year, in "Socialist Reconstruction of Society," delivered immediately after the organization of the IWW,¹ De Leon amplified this theme, relating it to the tactics the American workers would have to

¹ The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was organized in 1905 on the principles developed by De Leon. However, the tide of classconscious organization quickly reached its crest and ebbed without engulfing the main body of American workers. In 1908, anarcho-syndicalist elements in the IWW gained

apply simultaneously on the political and economic fields, saying:

Like the slough shed by the serpent that immediately reappears in its new skin, the political State will have been shed, and society will simultaneously appear in its new administrative garb. The mining, the railroad, the textile, the building industries, down or up the line, each of these, regardless of former political boundaries, will be the constituencies of that new central authority, the rough scaffolding of which was raised last week in Chicago. Where the General Executive Board of the Industrial Workers of the World [i.e., the Industrial Union Congress] will sit, there will be the nation's capital. Like the flimsy card-houses that children raise, the present political governments of counties, of states, aye, of the city on the Potomac herself, will tumble down, their places taken by the central and subordinate administrative organs of the nation's industrial forces.

A question arising here is this: Is the goal thus outlined, whose soundness De Leon demonstrated early in the century, valid today?

No one is more profoundly conscious of swiftly changing conditions than is the alert, scientifically grounded Socialist. He is aware of the giant strides of technology and science, and of the changes these have wrought in the nature of the labor process.

But the point to note, the point that would-be "Marxist" critics of the SLP persistently ignore, is that the very factors on which De Leon premised his Socialist Industrial Union program *have grown and strengthened in the intervening decades*. Agriculture, for example, was conducted almost entirely on a small scale in De Leon's day. Today agriculture is in a stage of advanced industrialization.

Simultaneously, the concentration of capital resulting from the operation of the competitive laws inherent in capitalism has gone on apace. Today a few hundred major corporations account for more than 70 per cent of the nation's industrial output. And every advance in the concentration of the capital employed in social production renders the more valid the Socialist Industrial Union program. Not only does it make all the easier the task of taking over the industries, of expropriating the expropriators, it also broadens and perfects the productive instruments that, under Socialism, will form the constituencies of administration.

Even the strides of science contribute to the validity of De Leon's brilliant concept of Industrial Union government—a concept, we may add, that Lenin conceded to be the only contribution to the science of Socialism since Marx. It suffices here to mention recent advances in the technology of atomic reactors and of high-field superconductors. These now make possible the construction of Gargantuan reactors capable of producing

control of the organization through strongarm methods. They scrapped the political clause in the Preamble and converted the organization into an anarcho-syndicalist body.

huge quantities of electricity at a phenomenally low cost per kilowatt hour and distributing it over vast areas of the nation. But even capitalist-minded atomic scientists perceive that their technological know-how has outstripped the conditions of political society and the profit motivations of capitalism. Only when the absurdity of territorial fragmentation is ended and production reorganized on rational lines can society exploit these and other great scientific developments so pregnant with good for all mankind.

Reading Assignment:

"Socialism From Utopia to Science" by Frederick Engels

(Chapter 3—"Scientific Socialism")

"Burning Question of Trades Unionism" by Daniel De Leon
"From Tribal Councils to Industrial Union Administration"
(Part Seven)

Self-Testing Questions

1. In what way does machinery become "the most powerful weapon in the war of capital against the working class"?
2. Suppose an industry is nationalized, converted into State property. Does this alter the wage status of labor?
3. What is the "historic mission of unionism"?
4. What is the fundamental difference between the purpose of a political State and the purpose of Socialist government?

12. THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY—SOCIALIST TACTICS

This nation, the United States of America, was born in revolution. Lincoln, on more than one occasion, affirmed the right of the people to effect a fundamental change in their system of government. In a speech in Congress, Jan. 12, 1848, he said:

Any people anywhere, being inclined and having the power, have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable, a most sacred right—a right which we hope and believe is to liberate the world.

And in his first inaugural address, March 4, 1861, Lincoln said:

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it.

Lincoln had a sound basis for thus affirming the right of revolution. Indeed, the primary document of this nation, the immortal Declaration of Independence, asserts in so many words—

That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends [Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness], it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Today, of course, the capitalist class would like us all to forget this revolutionary tradition and the fundamental right of the people to abolish the present system of government. Through its schools, churches, literature, theaters, motion pictures, radio and television, etc., the capitalist class has sought to denigrate the very idea of revolution, repudiating, in effect, its own birth-right. By means of constant repetition the concept of "revolution," which to Lincoln was "a most sacred right," has been mixed up in the public mind with violence, bloodshed and "subversion."

The purpose of all this is quite obvious. The capitalist class, fearful that the mass of useful producers—the workers—may perceive the monstrous injustice of private ownership of the socially operated means of wealth production, has become ultraconservative. It is therefore employing all its formidable powers of mis-education to prejudice the minds of the workers against their own liberation.

As De Leon summed up capitalist thinking on this subject:

Republics are born amidst the convulsions of revolutions, and no revolution is so violent as that that gives birth to a capitalist republic. A time comes, however, when even the remembrance of those revolutionary days becomes dangerous to the republic; they suggest revolution to the proletariat or working class. When that time comes the "republic" has rounded the circle, it clings to quiet, and it shrinks from the very mention of the word revolution.

It is important that all Socialists be absolutely clear both on the legal and moral right of the people to effect a revolutionary change and on the *nature* and *quality* of the change that is proposed.

This brings us to the question of tactics and the role of Marx's materialist conception of history in determining tactics.

In this connection, we must bear in mind that it is not just the *mode of production* to which we must turn for the answer to the question of how capitalism is to be abolished and replaced with Socialism; we must also consider the nation's political institutions and even its traditions, which also play a role. As Engels put it in a letter to Vera Zasulich, April 23, 1885:

To me the historic theory of Marx is the fundamental condition of all REASONED and consistent revolutionary tactics; to discover these tactics one has only to apply the theory to the economic and political conditions of the country in question.

Applying Marx's historic theory to American economic and political conditions, we find that a number of facts leap into prominence. In enumerating these we do not suggest that those named first have a primary importance, for all are of primary importance, and all must be considered in weighing the question of tactics.

1. Thanks to the extraordinary foresight of the Founding Fathers, we have a Constitution that, in effect, legalizes revolution. This is the way Abraham Lincoln described it in a letter to Alexander H. Stephens, Jan. 19, 1859:

The right of peaceable assembly and of petition, and by Article Fifth of the Constitution, the right of amendment, is the constitutional substitute for [armed] revolution.

Daniel De Leon, in a DAILY PEOPLE editorial, March 10, 1911, was more explicit, saying:

... To speak, not irreverently of a great document, but with historic accuracy, the Constitution of the United States has become a misfit. The body social has outgrown it. Yet, such is the exceptional merit of that document, that, first of its

kind, it proclaimed the mutability of social conditions, and foremost of all of its kind, it incorporated in itself the people's right and duty to change it, and adapt it to the altered conditions, according as to them may seem fit. The amendment clause [Article V] in the Constitution is the legalizing of revolution.

2. Thus the political institutions of this country offer the prospect of a peaceful and civilized revolutionary change. They enable us, the revolutionaries, to preach and teach revolution in the broad open day. Only thus can we reach the mass of workers who must furnish both the political numbers and the industrial might to accomplish the revolution. The alternative would be conspiracy, for the rejection of the peaceful means of political action (of which the ballot is but one aspect; open agitation being the other) would, in De Leon's words, consign the movement to the circumscribed sphere of a rathole. There the mass of workers could not possibly be reached.

3. The political movement is indispensable. But the goal of the political movement is purely *destructive*. "Suppose," said De Leon in "Socialist Reconstruction of Society," "that, at some election, the classconscious political arm of labor were to sweep the field; suppose the sweeping were done in such a landslide fashion that the capitalist election officials are themselves so completely swept off their base that they wouldn't, if they could, and that they couldn't, if they would, count us out; suppose that, from President down to Congress and the rest of the political redoubts of the capitalist political robber burg, our candidates were installed; suppose that, what would there be for them to do? Simply to *adjourn themselves, on the spot, sine die* [i.e., without arrangements for reconvening]. Their work would be done by disbanding."

4. The so-called "Communists'" concept of "Socialism" is the authoritarian one in which the State takes command of the situation. But, as we have already shown (see Lesson 11), the goal of bona fide Socialism is an industrial democracy, an Industrial Union Administration in which the workers themselves will have a democratic mastery of their tools and products. Goals determine methods. The industrial-democracy goal of bona fide Socialism requires that the political movement—the Socialist Labor Party as well as the elected political candidates of the revolution—disband once the signal for the revolution is given. As De Leon put it:

The political movement of labor that, in the event of triumph, would prolong its existence a second after triumph, would be a usurpation. It would be either a usurpation or the signal for a social catastrophe. It would be the signal for a social catastrophe if the political triumph did not find the working class of the land industrially organized [organized into Socialist Industrial Unions], that is, in full possession of the

plants of production and distribution, capable, accordingly, of assuming the integral conduct of the productive powers of the land. The catastrophe would be instantaneous. The plants of production and distribution having remained in capitalist hands, production would be instantly blocked. On the other hand, if the political triumph does find the working class industrially organized, then for the political movement to prolong its existence would be to attempt to usurp the powers which its very triumph announces have devolved upon the central administration of the industrial organization. The "reason" for a political movement [to agitate, educate and raise the issue of Socialism on the political field] obviously unfits it to "take and hold" the machinery of production. What the political movement "moves into" is not the shops, but the robber burg of capitalism—for the purpose of dismantling it.

5. Right—the right of the Socialist ballot—without the might to back it up is moonshine. That "might" cannot be military in nature for reasons already touched upon. Military uprising implies conspiratorial preparation. Conspiracy excludes the masses. On the other hand it does *not* exclude police spies, and experience has shown that any attempt at conspiracy in planning the overthrow of capitalism would inevitably be the cynosure of activity by the FBI.

The might of the working class, therefore, must be industrial in character. It must be the organization of the workers along industrial lines, along the lines, that is, upon which capitalism organizes the workers to perform the labors of society. "... large capitalism," wrote De Leon, "is in such bloom as to have ranked the proletariat into the battalions for an industrial insurrection, and thereby to have furnished the revolution, as an equivalent for a military force, with a mighty non-military engine of physical force." (DAILY PEOPLE, Aug. 3, 1909)

6. Unlike the political movement, whose goal is *destructive*, the Socialist Industrial Union is *constructive* in purpose. Its mission will be twofold. First, it will supply the *force* with which to compel the outvoted capitalists to accept the Socialist verdict at the ballot box. Secondly, after taking over the industries and services, it will constitute the framework of the Industrial Republic of Labor.

All this is elaborated in the two reading assignments that follow this lesson. Here we must grasp the point that while De Leon formulated this program, in a deeper sense it was dictated by the material and political conditions of capitalist America, a fact that De Leon himself stressed. In an industrially undeveloped country, or in a country in which, instead of political democracy, authoritarian doctrines in government prevail, obviously this program would not apply.

One point more. Revolutions are not *made*, they *come*. Before there can be a revolution there must be a revolutionary situation. A revolutionary situation can no more be created by Socialist agitators than a hurri-

cane can be created by meteorologists. It is a consequence rather of the coming to a head of contradictions that are inherent in the old society. These contradictions, which will be dealt with in the following series of lessons on Marxian economics, are already gnawing at the vitals of capitalism. Sooner or later they will create the conditions of capitalist crisis and breakdown which, in turn, will jolt the workers out of their apathy and compel them to face the task history has assigned them. The success or failure of the Socialist revolution will then depend upon the preparatory work of the Socialist Labor Party.

Reading Assignment:

"Socialist Reconstruction of Society" by Daniel De Leon
"Socialist Industrial Unionism: The Workers' Power" by Eric Hass.

Self-Testing Questions

1. Why is the political movement unfit to "take and hold"?
2. Why is it vital that the Socialist movement "give a chance to the peaceful solution of the great question at issue"?
3. Explain why the industrial movement alone is fit to "take and hold."
4. What is the difference between a "general strike" and the "general lockout of the capitalist class"?
5. Why is the "form" of industrial unionism not enough to make a union a truly working-class organization?
6. Why is the industrial form **ESSENTIAL** in the economic movement aiming for Socialism?

13. MARXIAN ECONOMICS — THE LAW OF VALUE

The importance of the *law of value* and the theory of *surplus value* cannot be exaggerated. Upon a clear understanding of this law and its corollary rests the fate of the working class. Wars, depressions, unemployment, mass poverty, monetary inflation—all these and many other economic and social phenomena flow from the working out of the law of value and its corollary surplus value. Through an understanding of Marxian economics we may see through the superficialities of life and observe the basic cause of the evils and contradictions that beset society. We may learn exactly how the capitalist class exploits and robs the working class on a colossal scale. We may learn how the economic power of the nation is being centralized in a few giant capitalist corporations. And we may learn what causes strikes—and how the labor leaders betray the workers in the settlements they negotiate. It follows that a study of the law of value and its corollary surplus value is a *must* for every responsible and serious-thinking worker. As De Leon put it:

The strongest spot in the fortress of Socialism is the Marxian law of value. It is at once the keystone of Socialism and the hearth from which the refutation of all bourgeois schemes radiates. Against that spot the bourgeois artillery is directed most numerous, and correct is the judgment of instinct of the bourgeois in their strategy. If the Marxian law of value could only be battered down, bourgeois society is vindicated. ["Marxian Science and the Colleges"]

How true! Pick up almost any high school or college textbook on economics and you will find therein one or more of the standard "refutations" of what is loosely called "the labor theory of value." Few indeed are the professors of economics who have not cultivated a plausible "refutation" of Marx.

It is one of the delectable ironies of history, though, that the economic law on which the capitalists and their professorial toadies vent such concentrated fury is not in its main premise Marx's discovery at all! This main premise is that it is the labor time embodied in commodities that determines their exchange value. As Marx himself wrote in "Critique of Political Economy" (1859):

The first sensible analysis of exchange value as labor time, made so clear as to seem almost commonplace, is to be found in the work of a man of the New World where the bourgeois

relations of production imported together with their representatives sprouted rapidly in a soil which made up its lack of historical traditions with a surplus of humus. That man was Benjamin Franklin, who formulated the fundamental law of political economy in his first work which he wrote when a mere youth . . .

Franklin was 23 when he formulated the law our modern bourgeois so heartily detest. In an essay, dated April 3, 1729, bearing the title, "A Modest Enquiry into the Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency," young Franklin wrote:

By labor may the value of silver be measured as well as other things. As, suppose one man employed to raise corn, while another is digging and refining silver; at the year's end, or at any other period of time, the complete produce of corn, and that of silver, are the natural price of each other; and if one be twenty bushels, and the other twenty ounces, then an ounce of that silver is worth the labor of raising a bushel of that corn. Now if by the discovery of some nearer, more easy or plentiful mines, a man may get forty ounces of silver as easily as formerly he did twenty, and the same labor is still required to raise twenty bushels of corn, then two ounces of silver will be worth no more than the same labor of raising one bushel of corn, and that bushel of corn will be as cheap at two ounces, as it was before at one, *ceteris paribus* [all other things being equal].

"The transformation of actual products into exchange values," wrote Marx of Franklin, "is self-evident with him and the only question is as to finding a quantitative measure of value. 'Trade,' says he [Franklin], 'in general being nothing else but the exchange of labor for labor, the value of all things is, as I have said before, most justly measured by labor.'"

It goes without saying that the capitalists and their pedagogic apologists never mention that the revered and respected Franklin held these views on value. It was Karl Marx, they say, who "invented this nonsense."

Economists in Europe sweated for centuries over the problem of why commodities exchanged as they did. Why, at a certain period, did a bushel of wheat, a yard of linen, a cloth cap and a bottle of wine all exchange equally? What did they all have in common in equal proportions? Failure to understand economic laws was the rock on which the best-laid plans of statesmen were often wrecked. The physical and exact sciences made great progress, but economics remained a mystery. It was under this compelling need for understanding of the system's behavior and contradictions

that, in the eighteenth century, Franklin, in the *New World*, and the Englishman, Adam Smith, in the *Old World*, independently reasoned to the conclusion that commodities exchange in the market on the basis of the amount of labor (measured in time) embodied in them. In the early nineteenth century, another Englishman, David Ricardo, one of the greatest of the classical economists, arrived at the same conclusion in his monumental study on taxation.

Karl Marx hailed the great pioneering work of the classical economists, and took up the investigation where they left off. Not only did Marx bring new light to the law of value, light that cleared up all the major mysteries of the economic operations of capitalism, but he thereby also supplied one of the cornerstones of a great movement of human emancipation. Together with the materialist conception of history and the principle of the class struggle, the law of value, with its surplus-value corollary, became the foundation of scientific Socialism.

Marx began his great work "Capital" with an analysis of a *commodity*. It is logical therefore that we begin our introduction to Marxian economics with a definition of "commodity."

A commodity is a product of human labor that by its properties satisfies a human want of some sort or another and that is produced for someone else's use, i.e., for exchange.

All three conditions are essential to make a thing a commodity. As Marx summarized the point in "Capital":

A thing can be a use-value, without having value. This is the case whenever its utility to man is not due to labor. Such are air, virgin soil, natural meadows, etc. A thing can be useful, and the product of human labor, without being a commodity. Whoever directly satisfies his wants with the produce of his own labor, creates, indeed, use-values, but not commodities. In order to produce the latter, he must not only produce use-values, but use-values for others, social use-values. Lastly, nothing can have value, without being an object of utility. If the thing is useless, so is the labor contained in it; the labor does not count as labor, and therefore creates no value.

From the foregoing it will be noted that commodities have two kinds of value—*use* value and *exchange* value.

We know of no definitions of use value and exchange value that are clearer or better suited for the beginner in Socialism than those in Arnold Petersen's "The High Cost of Living." We therefore quote the following from this fine essay:

"The use value of a commodity is determined by its particular quality of satisfying a human need of some sort or other. A police club, *e.g.*, may be very useful as a means of defense against assailants; it is equally useful for the purpose of cracking the heads of

striking workers. Its value in exchange, or exchange value, however, is determined by the amount of socially necessary labor time required for its production. Let us see how.

"Suppose we have two commodities, say a hat and a pair of shoes, and assume that one exchanges for the other in the market (or, in everyday parlance: fetches the same price). It is clear that these two must have something in common, something apart from their particular utilities. For if we were to consider their utility only we might well ask: 'Why is a pair of shoes equal to a hat; why are they not equal, for instance, to a diamond ring?' Most people would argue that in point of utility the shoes rank above the diamond ring. The reason, then, why it would require ever so many pairs of shoes to exchange for a diamond ring is that it has required *more socially necessary labor time to produce the ring than it did to produce the shoes.*

"Hence a given quantity of socially necessary labor time in one commodity will exchange for the same quantity of labor time in any other commodity, regardless of the particular utilities of the respective commodities. . . . Ricardo . . . says: 'That this [labor time] is really the foundation of the exchangeable value of all things, excepting those which cannot be increased by human industry, is a doctrine of the utmost importance in political economy, for from no other source do so many errors, and so much difference of opinion in that science proceed, as from the vague ideas which are attached to the word value.'

"The Socialist, acknowledging the truth of this statement, has taken the warning to heart. The capitalist professional economists, however, true to their class interests, scenting the danger and perceiving the revolutionary tendency in admitting that labor is the only source of value, have, ostrich-like, buried their heads in the sand of economic fancy and fiction, and persistently denied or ignored this cardinal principle."

Note well that the value of a commodity (and by "value" we mean hereafter *value in exchange*) is determined by the amount of *socially necessary* labor time embodied in it. Capitalist wiseacres, imagining they are dealing Marxism a mortal blow, misinterpret what they call "Marx's labor theory of value" as meaning that the more labor is expended on a commodity the greater is its value. This is silly. Marx, of course, perceived and noted that wasted labor does not create value. "The labor time socially necessary," he wrote in "Capital," "is that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and with the average degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time." To illustrate the point Marx wrote:

"The introduction of power looms into England probably reduced by one-half the labor required to weave a given quantity of yarn into cloth. The handloom weavers, as a matter of fact, continued to require the same time as before; but for all that, the product of one hour of their labor represented after the change only half an hour's social labor, and consequently fell to one-half of its former value."

When we go to the store we do not, of course, inquire as to the socially necessary labor time embodied in the thing we are going to buy. We think only of its *price*. What, then, is "price" and how is it related to value?

Everyone is familiar with the law of supply and demand. It is the most elementary law in economics. When the supply of a commodity exceeds the demand the price goes down. Contrariwise, when demand exceeds the supply the price rises. In the long run, however, these fluctuating factors, arising from the anarchy of capitalist competition, tend to offset each other. Thus, although commodities at any particular time sell above or below their value, in the long run these factors tend to equilibrate, and the commodities sell at their values. "The law of value, acting like the centripetal force in nature," wrote De Leon, "counteracts, if it does not at long intervals, cure, the centrifugal forces in the capitalist market."

Capitalist monopolies may, of course, through conspiracies, hold prices of commodities whose production they control artificially above what would be their market prices. No society, however, can for long tolerate this interference with economic processes, hence outlaws them.

One point more. It is a point that we make only in passing but one sufficiently pregnant with meaning for Marx to devote many pages in "Capital" to its analysis. It is that while all kinds of skilled and unskilled labor go into the production of commodities, in determining the value of commodities this labor is reduced to homogeneous human labor, which is to say, to human labor in the abstract.

We can think of no better summing up than this extract from De Leon:

"The law of value is no idle abstraction leading nowhere. From the law flow, and constitute integral parts of it, a number of corollaries, economic and social. The leading ones are:

"1. Concentration of productive powers increases the volume of wealth, lowers the value of goods, and clears the field of petty and competitive elements;

"2. Under capitalism, labor power, being a commodity like all others, must decline in value [see Lesson 14];

"3. Concentration of productive powers is an irresistible force;

"4. The irresistible force congests wealth in the hands of the few and pauperizes the masses;

"5. Labor alone produces all [social] wealth; the wealth in the hands of the capitalist class is plunder.

"In the cards of the law of value is, accordingly, revolution—the adjustment of society to the unbearably changed conditions. The plumb line of the readjusted social structure is the economic interests of the working class."

Reading Assignment:

- "Capitalism vs. Socialism" by Daniel De Leon
(a debate with William H. Berry, a capitalist spokesman)
- "High Cost of Living" by Arnold Petersen
(pages 1 to bottom of 6)
- "Value, Price and Profit" by Karl Marx
(Chapter VI on "Value and Labor")

Self-Testing Questions

1. What are the three essential qualities of a commodity?
2. What does "labor time socially necessary" mean?
3. What are the two kinds of value possessed by commodities?
4. Do commodities always exchange at their value? What is the relationship of price to value?
5. How does improving technology affect value? What is the effect on small and weak competitors?
6. What is wrong with the theory that supply and demand determine value?

14. MARXIAN ECONOMICS — SURPLUS VALUE — I

There was no mystery about the exploitation of the chattel slave. It was visible, undisguised. The slave belonged to his master and so did his product.

Similarly, there was no mystery about the exploitation of the feudal serf. He worked so many days for his feudal lord and was then permitted to work so many days for himself: or his suzerain's bailiff came and carted away a portion of his crops. The exploitation was unconcealed.

But the exploitation of "free" wage labor is cloaked by the economic mystifications of the system. Indeed, capitalism abounds in economic illusions that tend to conceal from the worker both the fact of his dependency or enslavement and the method whereby he is systematically exploited, robbed of the major portion of his product.

"In Homeric mythology it was the giant-beautiful deities of Olympus whom mists were made to conceal from profane eyes," wrote De Leon. "In bourgeois mythology the mists are used to conceal the bourgeois' hand in labor's pockets — a necessary bit of necromancy. We have called such necromancy a buttress, to give color to the myth that, not labor, but idleness is the source of value."

Many workers, of course, are convinced they are being "robbed." But in most cases they imagine that they are being robbed by merchants or landlords, in short, that they are robbed as consumers. We shall show that this is an illusion and that the real robbery of wage workers takes place at the point of production.

Another illusion, fostered by capitalist economics, is that of the "free contract." The modern wage worker is neither owned outright, as was the chattel slave, nor is he bound to the soil as was the feudal serf. He is "free" in the sense that he may quit his capitalist master whenever he so desires; there are no legal restraints to his quitting. But when he quits one capitalist master he is driven by economic necessity immediately to seek another. This follows because labor power is a perishable commodity. A capitalist butter merchant may put his stock of butter in cold storage if he is not satisfied with the going price, and wait, hoping that the market price will rise. But labor power is inseparable from the living worker, and if the worker

is put in "cold storage" he will soon die. Thus, for each day that the worker is jobless, his day's labor power is lost forever.

In other words, although wage workers are "free" nominally, *as a class* they are absolutely dependent upon and enslaved to and exploited by the capitalists *as a class*.

Socialists are asked: How can you get along without capital under Socialism? The question reflects confusion on the meaning of "capital," a confusion, we may add, that is systematically sown by the apologists and defenders of capitalism. For example, we have before us the February, 1962, issue of *Youngstown Bulletin*, published by the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Co. for distribution among its employees. In this issue there is a drawing of a hairy, naked man kneeling by a stream, trying to catch a fish with his hands. The caption reads "Imagine a World Without Any Capital!" From the text for which the picture is an illustration we quote the following definition of "capital":

Capital is anything—a tool, a place, a machine—used to produce other goods.

It is hard to imagine a world without any capital at all. Above is the artist's idea of a scene in this kind of world: a primitive man catching fish with his bare hands. The lake, the fish, the man are all as nature made them. When the spear and the net were invented, capital began to transform the world.

The definition is basically erroneous. Its faultiness becomes apparent when we invoke the science of philology, which deals among other things with linguistic history and word origins. One of the things philology teaches is that when a thing exists and impresses itself on our consciousness we invent a word to express that thing. Applying this rule we observe that the word "capital" in relation to means of production is not ancient at all, but of relatively recent origin, coming into fairly general use in this sense only in the 18th century.

This is the point: There will be means of production under Socialism. There will be factories, machines, mines, etc. But there will be *no* capital. The reason is simply that capital is not merely wealth used in the production of more wealth. Before the means of production become capital there must exist a class of people who are nominally free but who, having no tools of their own, are compelled to sell their labor power to

another class that owns the tools. As De Leon put it:

Capital is that portion of wealth which, being privately owned in a society where proletarians abound, is used to produce more wealth by a system that exploits the capital-less proletarians.

It follows that the moment the politically and industrially organized workers take possession of the means of social production the latter will lose their attribute of "capital" and will become mere social means of production.

We have said the wage worker must sell his labor power to the capitalist as a commodity. However, the capitalists and their labor lieutenants, the union leaders, deny that labor power is a commodity. Congress has even embodied the statement in the antitrust laws (Clayton Act) that "the labor of a human being is not a commodity or article of merchandise." But this does not alter the facts one whit. The evidence is overwhelming that labor power, which is bought and sold like any other commodity and is subject to the same economic laws, *is* a commodity. Indeed, the very expression "*labor market*," in common usage today, is proof of the accuracy of this assertion, for a market can only be a place where things are bought and sold. A cotton market is where cotton is bought and sold; a cattle market is where cattle are bought and sold—and a labor market is *where labor is bought and sold*.

Like all other commodities, labor power is subject to the law of supply and demand. When the demand for labor is brisk and relatively few workers are looking for jobs, its price, which has the special name of *wages*, tends to rise. Union leaders who negotiate contracts embodying the increases then shout "victory!" and claim the credit for themselves. On the other hand, if there is an abundant supply of labor power and the demand is small, wages tend to fall. The union leaders, who boasted of "victory" when wages rose as a result of favorable conditions in the labor market, now accept wage cuts. This they call "facing realities."

It is a simple matter to perceive that, by and large, taking into account the ebb and flow of the market, automobiles, shoes, suits of clothes, etc., exchange according to the labor hours socially necessary for their production. But what of the value of labor power, the commodity that exists in the muscle, bones and brain of the wage worker, on the sale of which he depends for a living? Here, too, the law of value applies. Before the worker has any labor power to sell he must be fed, sheltered, clothed and educated or trained.

Also—and this is a factor peculiar to the commodity labor power—the worker must supply a new generation of wage slaves to take his place when he is

thrown on the industrial scrapheap. In determining the value of labor power, therefore, the cost of supporting the worker's offspring must be added to the socially necessary labor time embodied in the food, clothing, shelter, etc., required to keep the worker himself in working condition. (Not only is labor power the only commodity capable of creating new values; it is the only commodity capable of reproducing itself.)

Finally, the value of labor power is affected by the conditions of a particular country, especially the conditions under which the modern working class was formed, and the traditions established. For example, as Prof. Thorold Rogers related in his "Six Centuries of Work and Wages," the Great Plague that struck England in the middle of the fourteenth century with devastating force so reduced the supply of wage labor that, despite the most savagely enforced "wage-control" decrees, the price of labor power soared. The effect of this event on British wage standards was felt for centuries.

Similarly, in the United States, where capitalist expansion was prodigious following the Civil War, a great influx of immigrants from Europe was not sufficient to supply the full demand for labor, especially in view of the existence of a frontier—virtually free land—to which wage slaves could escape. American wage standards were affected accordingly.

As Marx dealt with this point in "Capital":

... His [the worker's] means of subsistence must therefore be sufficient to maintain him in his normal state as a laboring individual. His natural wants, such as food, clothing, fuel, and housing, vary according to the climatic and other physical conditions of his country. On the other hand, the number and extent of his so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development, and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilization of a country, more particularly on the conditions under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free laborers has been formed.

For example, in the United States, where automobiles have become an *essential* means of transportation to and from work for a large percentage of workers, the cost of such transportation enters into the value of the American worker's labor power.

Some kinds of labor power have a greater exchange value—and normally fetch a higher price—than others. The fact that more labor has gone into the education of the chemist than in that of the janitor is one reason why the chemist's labor power has a greater value. Even so, basically, the chemist and the janitor are in the same boat. The labor power of the chemist, and of other higher-priced workers, is still a commodity and is subject to the same economic laws as the labor power of the janitor. If, as seems quite likely in a few years, the supply of chemists, technicians, engi-

neers, etc., becomes plentiful in relation to demand, the wages of these highly trained professionals (which are given the fancy name of "salaries") will fall.

The student will have noted that we have called the commodity the worker sells "*labor power*," not "*labor*." The difference is important. As Marx explained in "Capital":

When we speak of capacity for labor [labor power], we do not speak of labor, any more than when we speak of capacity for digestion, we speak of digestion.

All of us have the capacity for digestion. But until we ingest food we do not use this capacity and there is no digestion. Similarly, the worker possesses labor power (capacity for labor). But until the labor power is sold and delivered to the capitalist buyer there is no labor.

Once we understand that labor power is a commodity and that its price (wage) is determined in the long run by what it costs to keep the worker in working condition—plus what it takes to support his family—we are prepared to examine the theory that goes to

the heart of capitalist exploitation and that explains why it is that the capitalists, who perform no useful economic function, sit on mountains of wealth, while workers, who perform all the useful labors of society, are kept in a perpetual state of economic bondage. This is the theory of surplus value.

Reading Assignment:

- "Wage-Labor and Capital" by Karl Marx
(Foreword by Arnold Petersen and Chapters I, II, III, IV and V)
- "Value, Price and Profit" by Karl Marx
(Chapters I, II, III, IV, V and VII. For continuity you may want to re-read Chapter VI which was part of the reading assignment of Lesson 13.)
- "Capital and Labor" by Arnold Petersen

Self-Testing Questions

1. Why is "free" wage labor not really free?
2. What is capital? What historical condition must prevail before the means of production can have the character of capital?
3. Define "labor power." Did the chattel slave sell "labor power"? Did the medieval serf?
4. What are wages?
5. What determines the value of labor power?

15. MARXIAN ECONOMICS —
SURPLUS VALUE — II

When a worker goes into a factory on Monday morning his hands are empty. When he walks out on Friday evening, lo and behold! He has a paycheck in his hands. If he meets a Socialist he may, as many uninformed workers do, deny that he is being exploited by his employer. "Don't attack my boss," he may say. "Look at this check. I'm getting little enough as it is. If you put my boss out of business I would get nothing."

As De Leon, using the example we are paraphrasing, observed, this worker labors under a delusion. He is like the ignorant farmer who thinks he must have potato bugs to raise potatoes. He thinks the capitalist (whose role, as we shall show, is entirely parasitic) supports *him*, whereas in fact, *he* supports the capitalist.

We now have the basic equipment—definitions of value, price, wages, capital, labor power, etc.—needed to penetrate the veil of mystification that envelops capitalist exploitation. We are therefore prepared to deal with the question: What is it that goes on in the factory that the worker doesn't understand?

The capitalist buys the worker's labor power. Why? *To consume its use value.* In this the capitalist is not unlike the buyer of any other commodity. We buy a pair of shoes to wear on our feet, to use up their use value. We buy an automobile to consume its use value traveling to and from work.

But what is the use value of labor power? *It is the*

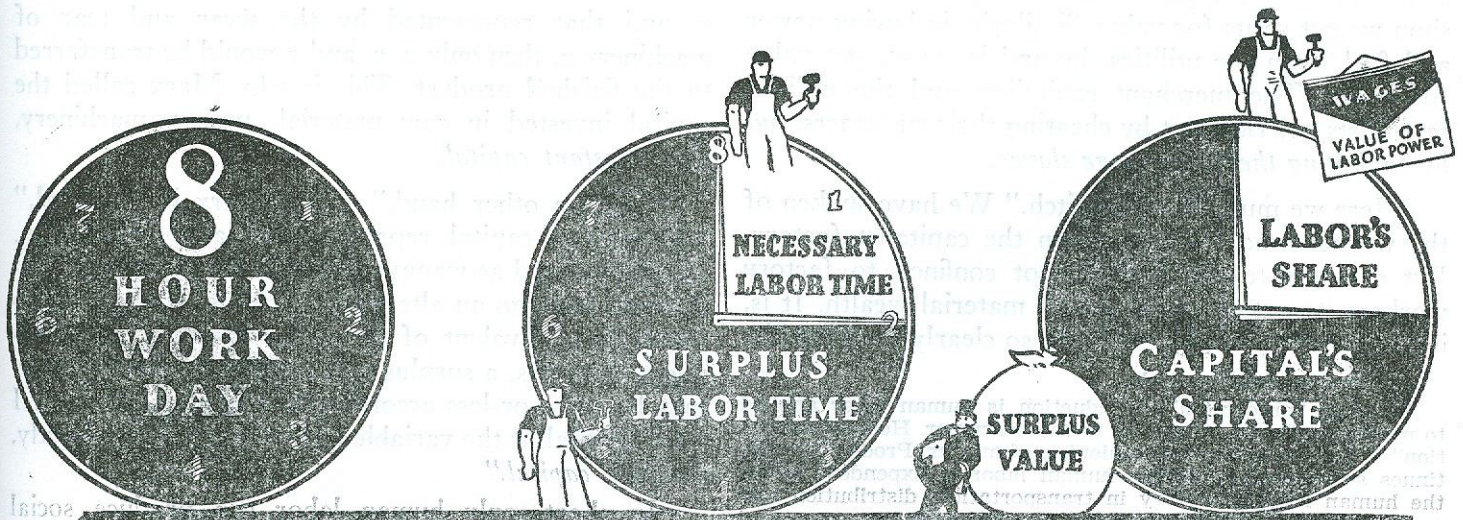
unique ability to produce exchange value, the ability, that is, to create exchange value over and above the wages paid by the capitalist to the worker for his labor power.

The simplest way to explain the actual process of capitalist exploitation is to examine the working day. Before the capitalist can get any profit, or surplus value, he must recover the price he has agreed to pay the worker for a day's labor power. Therefore, when our worker comes on the job he spends the first part of the working day producing new values equal to his wages. To this part of the working day, Karl Marx gave the name *necessary labor time*.

But the worker doesn't stop when he has reproduced the value of his labor power. He doesn't even pause to take a smoke. He continues to work for five, six or seven hours longer, or until he has delivered the full eight hours of labor power to his capitalist employer. It is during this part of the working day that the worker produces *surplus value*, value in excess of the value of his labor power. To this second part of the working day, Marx gave the name *surplus labor time*.

If we assume the working day to be eight hours, and the necessary labor time to be two hours, we may illustrate our point as follows:

2 hours (a) (b) 6 hours (c)
 necessary labor time; surplus labor time;
 value of labor power; surplus value



But if the capitalist can find a way to reduce the necessary labor time by, say, half an hour, the advantage to himself is fairly obvious. The length of the working day being unchanged we would then have —

1½ hours	6½ hours	
(a)	(b)	(c)
necessary labor time	surplus labor time	

In short, every minute that is subtracted from the time required to reproduce wages means one minute more for the production of surplus value, of *unpaid labor*.

One way of reducing the necessary labor time, the most direct, is a reduction of nominal (money) wages, a straight wage cut.

Another way is by an intensification of labor, a speedup, whereby the worker expends his labor power at a more rapid rate.

Still another way is through improved technology. Every improvement in production technique, specifically of the production of the necessaries of life required to keep the worker in working condition, reduces the time socially necessary for their (the necessaries') production, hence their value. As the value of the necessaries of life falls, so does the value of labor power. And as the value of labor power falls, the part of the working day in which it must be reproduced is shortened accordingly.

Here we can see how the very development of technology strengthens the hand of the capitalist exploiter while it weakens that of the exploited worker.

This is where labor is exploited, then, *at the point of production*. An individual worker here and there may be swindled by a merchant or cheated by a landlord. But the workers, as a class, are not exploited as consumers. By and large, when we go to the store to shop we get value for value. Similarly, in buying power and fuel from the utilities, by and large we get value for value. The merchant capitalists and the utilities capitalists get rich, not by cheating their customers, *but by exploiting their own wage slaves*.

Here we must "lock a switch." We have spoken of the worker who is exploited in the capitalist factory. But capitalist exploitation is not confined to factory workers, to actual producers of material wealth. It is, in fact, a *class act*. As De Leon so clearly explained it:

Go back to first principles.

What is "production"? Production is human labor applied to matter and rendered useful to the consumer. Hence "production" is not limited to the fashioning of matter. Production continues so long as necessary human labor is expended. Hence the human labor necessary in transportation, distribution and communication is part and parcel of production.

What is "exploitation"? Exploitation is the taking from the human labor necessary for production any part of the fruit of its efforts.

Consequently, exploitation extends all along the line, until the wealth so produced reaches the ultimate consumer.

The important point in this is that "exploitation," however seemingly otherwise, is not the act of any individual capitalist, or set of capitalists, perpetrated upon any individual workingman, or set of workingmen. Exploitation is a *CLASS act* — the act of the whole capitalist class — perpetrated upon a *CLASS* — the whole working class. (*DAILY PEOPLE*, Feb. 4, 1912.)

Much of the propaganda issuing from the capitalist camp consists of attempts to justify profit. One of the capitalists' favorites is the argument that *they* supply the tools.

But how precisely did the capitalists acquire the tools "they" supply? Did they invent and make the tools themselves? Obviously not. Yet tools are embodiments of human labor. Whose labor? The labor of wage workers in the past. Indeed, the tools "they," the capitalists, supply represent accumulated labor used to exploit living labor. It is this that stamps them with the character of capital.

But there is an implication in the capitalists' attempt to justify profit that we must also refute. It is the implication that tools, as well as human labor, are value-creating.

In refuting this it is necessary to demonstrate the real role of tools in the production of surplus value.

A part of the capital that the capitalist invests is for raw materials, machinery, power and other auxiliary means of production. In the process of production the value of the raw materials, power, etc., and even a fractional value of the machinery (wear and tear) is transferred to the finished product. The point is that in the process of production, when the transference takes place, there is no quantitative alteration of value. If the value of the raw materials were x , that of power y , and that represented by the wear and tear of machinery z , then only x , y , and z would be transferred to the finished product. This is why Marx called the capital invested in raw material, power, machinery, etc., *constant capital*.

"On the other hand," wrote Marx in "Capital," "that part of capital, represented by labor power [*i.e.*, capital invested as wages], does, in the process of production, undergo an alteration of value. It both reproduces the equivalent of its own value, and also produces an excess, a surplus value, which may itself vary, may be more or less according to circumstances. . . . I therefore call it the variable part of capital, or, shortly, *variable capital*."

In short, only human labor can produce social

values. Its quality is unique, and capital does not share it in any way.

The tendency under capitalism is constantly to intensify the exploitation of wage labor, *i.e.*, to cause it to produce more and more surplus value in relation to the variable capital that is advanced. Capitalist apologists, of course, argue that the contrary is true. That is, they point to rising money wages as evidence of a general improvement in the relative status of the workers. Thus, the capitalist apologists in this country boast that American wages are the highest in the world.

In one sense, they are right. Average money wages in the United States, or what Marx called *nominal wages*, are probably higher than anywhere else.

But, as experience has taught us, nominal wages are not the whole story. Money wages may go up without improving the condition of the workers one iota. Indeed, when living costs soar, workers may experience declining standards even when wages rise. Therefore, *real wages*, what wages will buy in the way of the necessities of life, tell us far more about the workers' actual condition.

However, if we want light on the degree to which workers are exploited, we must know something about their *relative wages*. Relative wages are wages in relation to what workers produce. And if we examine the relative wages of the American workers we learn that, far from being the highest, they are the lowest in the world! That is, the American workers, whose productivity is truly fabulous, receive a smaller proportionate

share in wages than any workers anywhere.

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Is it clear now why an understanding of the law of value and its corollary theory of surplus value is so important to the worker? Such understanding makes him conscious of his *class* interests. The classconscious worker can see through the specious reform proposals advanced in the name of "freedom." He is not beguiled by the schemes of capitalist-minded labor fakers, schemes designed to keep labor shackled to the capitalist juggernaut. He recognizes as utterly pernicious all efforts at keeping his class divided by racial prejudice. His doubts are resolved. He *knows* how labor is robbed. And he *knows* what his class must do to terminate the robbery. In short, the classconscious worker *knows* that his salvation, the salvation of labor, requires that the socially operated means of production be made the property of society.

Reading Assignment:

"Wage-Labor and Capital" by Karl Marx
(Chapters VI, VII, VIII, IX)

"Value, Price and Profit" by Karl Marx
(Chapters VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV)

Self-Testing Questions

1. What is the "use value" of the commodity labor power?
2. What is "surplus value"?
3. How can a capitalist make a profit by selling a commodity at its value?
4. What are "nominal wages"? "Real wages"? "Relative wages"?
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5. Why does technology steadily weight the scales against labor and in favor of the capitalists?

16. MARXIAN ECONOMICS — EVOLUTION OF EXCHANGE

We have spoken of exchange of commodities, such as hats for shoes, wherein the law of value asserts itself. But, as we all know, exchange today is not conducted along the lines of primitive barter. To buy a pair of shoes the owner of hats must exchange them for *money*. With the money he may then purchase the shoes. What is "money"?

To the capitalists, shrewd though they are in the manipulation of money, this question presents an eternal mystery. Bourgeois "experts" frequently concede that they do not really understand what money is. And the more the money system is reformed the deeper the mystery becomes.

The reasons for the capitalists' mystification are not difficult to discover. First of all, without a grasp of the law of value, money is indeed an unfathomable enigma. And the capitalists cannot concede the validity of the law of value without admitting, in effect, that the wealth in their possession was created by labor, hence is plunder.

But, as workers, we are not thus inhibited from seeking the truth. And the easiest way to come at the truth is to go back briefly to the earliest beginnings of exchange. We have already (in Lesson 7) briefly examined the communal society of our primitive ancestors. We learned that in this society production was carried on for use, not for sale and profit as it is today. Yet, evolutionary forces were already at work, forces that presaged exchange, first as an occasional and accidental phenomenon, later as a frequent, deliberate and normal social act. These forces we call "division of labor."

The earliest division of labor was based on physiologic factors. It was the product of sex and age differences, and it had the effect of increasing the goods available for consumption by the tribe. With the increase in population that the enlarged production supported, and the multiplication of tribes, another division of labor resulted that was based on the fact, as Marx explained it, that "different communities find different means of production, and different means of subsistence in their natural environment." Marx continued:

. . . Hence, their modes of production, and of living, and their products are different. It is this spontaneously developed

difference which, when different communities come in contact, calls forth the mutual exchange of products . . . ["Capital," chapter on "Division of Labor and Manufacture."]

For example, even in Neolithic times (latest Stone Age epoch), a degree of intercommunal specialization developed. "Neolithic groups mined flint and quarried specially suitable rock for axes, exchanging their products over a wide area." (V. Gordon Childe, "A History of Technology," Vol. I.) Later, in the Bronze Age, tribes living near sources of copper, such as the Assyrians near Urartu (Ararat), a similar speciality developed in the production of metal tools and weapons. They were traded for dried fish produced by tribes living on the seacoast, for baskets produced by tribes in whose territories the reeds, palm leaves and grasses most suitable for basket production abounded, and for many other articles.

The products that were exchanged were, in the beginning, accidental surpluses. ("The first step made by an object of utility towards acquiring exchange value is when it forms a non-use value for its owner, and that happens when it forms a superfluous portion of some article required for his immediate wants."—Marx.) However, the repetition of such exchange made of it in time a normal social act. Now the tribes deliberately strove to produce surpluses that they might exchange for objects in which neighboring tribes specialized. The Indian tribes of the Great Plains had reached this stage in the nineteenth century. Thus the Nez Perces had learned selective breeding and had produced the famed Pelouse horse that was traded all across the plains. The Crows were famed as weapons makers, the Blackfeet in particular liking their war shields. Even tribes at war with one another would frequently call a halt to the fighting and hold a rendezvous for purposes of trade.

The subsequent evolution of exchange is described by Arnold Petersen in his essay on "The High Cost of Living" in this summary:

. . . As the productivity of the human race increased, and its wants, and the desire to satisfy these wants, increased correspondingly, it became more and more difficult to exchange product for product directly. For instance one man might want to sell a certain thing and yet not be desirous of exchanging it for anything particular at that moment; and for other obvious reasons did it become impossible to exchange (barter) products directly. The necessity for a medium of exchange or a measure of value then arose.

At this early stage of society various commodities, at different times and in different countries, were set aside to meet this necessity. John Stuart Mill mentions furs, cattle, cubes of tea pressed close together, the shells called cowries on the coast of western Africa, blocks of salt in Abyssinia, iron in Lacedaemon, copper in the early Roman Republic, etc., etc., as having been used at one time or another as mediums of exchange.

Note that the exchange is still one of barter, commodity for commodity, but the barter is now indirect. Say, for example, that the following commodities, all of equivalent value, that is, all embodying approximately the same amount of socially necessary labor time, are brought to the market to be sold. Instead of being exchanged for one another they are now exchanged for a special commodity that society has chosen to play a "money" role:

40 bu. wheat	}	= x quantity of commodity y
200 lbs. dates		
3 lbs. copper		
30 yds. linen		
100 lbs. wool		

The owners of each of these commodities would "see" in x commodity y, so to speak, an equivalent value, the bodily form of the value of their own commodities. Commodity y is, of course, the product of some specifically useful concrete labor. Yet because commodity y, serves in the role of equivalent, it figures as the materialization of human labor in the abstract. In order to assert that its own value is created by labor in the abstract, by homogeneous human labor, each commodity brought to market equates itself in exchange with commodity y. Thus the law of value manifests itself, not as a human rationalization, but as an overriding law of nature.

Moreover, in this new phase of exchange—indirect barter, with a special commodity serving the "money" role—the commodity thus chosen may perform an important function without even being present, *i.e.*, it may function as a *measure of value*. At one time in early Roman history, cattle filled this role, oxen serving as "money" of large denomination, and sheep and goats as "small change." The English word "impecunious" (being without money) derives from the Latin word *pecus* (cattle). Thus it was possible to measure the value, say of 100 bushels of wheat, in terms of ideal or imaginary oxen, sheep or goats—just as today we may state the value of a ton of wheat in terms of imaginary dollars and cents.

With time and experience, society learned that the various commodities theretofore used in the capacity of medium of exchange and measure of value lacked essential qualities. Again quoting from Arnold Petersen's "The High Cost of Living":

... A medium of exchange or measure of value must be easily divisible; it must not be perishable and its bulk must be relatively small, so as to make it an easy matter to transport or carry it around. . . .

It was eventually found that the precious metals, gold and silver, were the only objects which were suited for this purpose. For a long time merchants would carry with them a bag of gold dust and weigh out the quantity required for any exchange of commodities. . . .

Precious metals used thus were still not money. And indirect barter with gold and silver as the medium of exchange still did not solve the problems created by the proliferation of commodity production and exchange. Indeed, as De Leon pointed out in his essay on "Money" "the market places [were] permanently verging on pandemonium." "Rows are the order of the day," wrote De Leon, "blows are not infrequent." Scales had to be carried about to weigh the gold or silver, and with every transaction there was wrangling over the scales' accuracy.

With the development of relatively strong central governments, conditions were created for the official weighing of the precious metals to improve their function in exchange. "The government, as the representative—theoretically, or in fact—of all the members of society," wrote De Leon, "placed its stamp upon certain quantities of gold and silver, stating how much each piece weighed or contained, and that became 'money.'" De Leon continued:

... Thus it is to be accounted for that so many coins today still bear the names of weight measures — pounds sterling, livre, peso, etc. They trace their names to that age that superseded barter, and that was itself superseded by "money" — to the age when the precious metals were singled out as the standard of value and the medium of exchange, and when they had to be weighed at each exchange. Then, and not until then, did "money" appear on the stage of history, and it was in that and no other way that it appeared.

But money in the shape of coins expresses a fixed standard. Besides being a medium of exchange and measure of value it performs another important function, that of *standard of price*. "As *measure of value*, and as *standard of price*," wrote Marx in "Capital," "money has two entirely distinct functions to perform. It is the measure of value inasmuch as it is the socially recognized incarnation of human labor; it is the standard of price inasmuch as it is a fixed weight of metal."

The value of an ounce of gold fluctuates according to changes in the amount of socially necessary labor time requisite for its production. Thus the value of one American dollar, the "gold content" of which is 1/35th of an ounce or 13 5/7 grains, as expressed in the prices of commodities, may rise or fall as mining and refining are affected by technology, accessibility of gold deposits, new gold strikes, etc.

Nevertheless, regardless of how the value of gold fluctuates, the dollar represents a fixed weight of the

metal, hence serves as a standard of price.

To illustrate take the following three commodities and assume that the value of each is expressed in the sums indicated:

1 pr. shoes	.....	\$10
1 bu. wheat	.....	\$ 2
1 pen	.....	\$ 1

In each case the price represents, or is the symbol for, a quantity of gold which embodies the same amount of socially necessary labor time as the commodities.

But now suppose that a great new deposit of gold is discovered in which the metal is more accessible. Suppose this new field is so rich that its discovery and exploitation result in a decline in the value of gold by 10 per cent. The amount of socially necessary labor time required to produce the shoes, wheat and pen remaining unchanged, it would now require a larger amount of gold to equate with them. However, note that this does not alter the efficacy of money as a standard of price. For, while the prices of all commodities would rise as a consequence of a fall in the value of gold, they would all rise in the same proportion. Thus, if the value of gold fell by 10 per cent the prices of the three commodities would be to the nearest decimal:

1 pr. shoes	.....	\$11.11
1 bu. wheat	.....	\$ 2.22
1 pen	.....	\$ 1.11

In this connection, it is important that governments, which have the power to alter the gold content of their monetary units, do not exercise this power but leave their standards fixed and unchanging. As Marx put it, "the less the [monetary] unit is subject to variation, so much the better does the standard of price fulfill its office." That office may be best understood perhaps if we consider the importance of fixed linear units of measurement. Imagine the chaos that would ensue if

the government, through its Bureau of Standards, Weights and Measures, were to institute frequent changes in the linear distances represented by an inch, foot, yard, etc.

The fact is that the gold content of the American dollar was changed only twice since 1792, and one of these changes was relatively slight. In 1792 the government set the value of the dollar at 24.75 grains of fine gold. This was equivalent to \$19.39 a fine ounce. Then, in the 1830s, Congress reduced the gold content of the dollar to 23.22 grains (\$20.67 an ounce) and this remained the standard until the Administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt set the "official price of gold at \$35 an ounce," an act that automatically reduced the gold content of the dollar (now non-convertible for the first time) to 13 5/7 grains.

The dollar fills the role of money in our country today only because society accepts it as the embodiment of a quantity of gold. Paper currency or silver, nickel and copper coins are mere symbols of the gold which is the real money. Thus, the same basic principle on which goods exchanged in the days of primitive barter—value for value—applies in this age in which the exchange is commodity-for-money and money-for-commodity.

Reading Assignment:

"The High Cost of Living" by Arnold Petersen
(Read the entire pamphlet, including the essays and colloquies on money by Daniel De Leon.)

Self-Testing Questions

1. What were the limitations of barter and why was a medium of exchange needed?
2. Must money be present to serve as a measure of value? Explain.
3. Why is gold best suited for the role of money?
4. Explain why a change in the value of gold cannot affect the monetary units in the performance of their function as a standard of price.

17. MARXIAN ECONOMICS — MONEY AND INFLATION

We have seen that, according to the Marxian law of value, the price of commodities in exchange is determined in the long run, taking into account the ebb and flow of the market, by the amount of labor time socially necessary for their production or reproduction.

We have learned also that the evolution of the tool, spurred by competitive forces inherent in capitalism, has the effect of cheapening commodities by reducing the amount of socially necessary labor time embodied in them.

Why, then, have the money prices of commodities not fallen accordingly?

It is fashionable among liberals to put the blame on the "monopolies." We know, of course, that price-rigging conspiracies among capitalists are fairly widespread. In 1961 seven executives of the big electrical equipment manufacturers were sent to jail for collusive price fixing. The general sympathy shown for these felons by businessmen reflected the attitude that their "crime" was not in conspiring to cheat the buyers of hundreds of millions of dollars worth of electrical equipment, but in getting caught!

However, even while conceding that capitalist pricing collusion is not uncommon, the primary explanation for the failure of most commodities to reflect the decline in their value in correspondingly lower monetary prices is the erosion of the value of the dollar. This erosion has more than offset the cheapening of the value of most commodities.

The erosion was given impetus by the Roosevelt Administration in 1934 when it reduced the gold content of the dollar from 23.22 fine grains to 13 5/7 fine grains. This was accomplished by raising the dollar "price" the United States Treasury would pay for gold from \$20.67 to \$35 an ounce.

By devaluing the dollar the Administration hoped to accomplish three things.

First, it hoped to stimulate American exports and gain advantages over competing nations in the world markets. This would follow because, assuming the value of the currencies of other nations remained unchanged, foreign customers who held these currencies would be able to get more for their money in the American market. However, the advantage gained for

American exporters was only temporary because the other great trading nations followed suit and devaluated *their* currencies. Soon international monetary exchange was back to approximately the same ratios that existed before the dollar was devaluated.

In its second objective, however, the Roosevelt Administration was more successful. By reducing the gold content of the dollar, the U.S. Treasury automatically made a "profit" on its gold hoard of approximately \$5 billion.

The third thing the Roosevelt Administration hoped to accomplish was to bolster domestic prices which had sagged disastrously as a consequence of "overproduction" and economic crisis. However, so strong were the depression forces that there was a long lag in the response of prices to the dollar devaluation. In fact, prices did not fully reflect the reduction of the dollar's gold content until World War II created an upsurge in the demand for every imaginable commodity.

During World War II and the ensuing decades the value of the dollar continued to erode. This erosion was due to *inflation*. What does "inflation" mean? Once upon a time it was generally understood that monetary inflation meant a debasement or depreciation of what the people used for money. Thus Henry VIII conceived a scheme for paying off the Crown's debts with debased coins. Before 1543 the English pound sterling had contained 18 pennyweights of alloy to 12 ounces of silver, and this was coined into 45 shillings. But in the issue of 1543 the debasement was two ounces of alloy in 12; in 1545, it was six ounces in 12; in 1546, it was eight ounces in twelve. "This vile mixture," said Prof. Thorold Rogers in "Six Centuries of Work and Wages," "was coined into 48 pieces." Prices, of course, reflected the debasement for a swindle of these proportions cannot long be kept from the people.

"Printing-press money," such as the greenbacks issued during the Civil War, was also generally recognized as "inflation."

However, when World War II brought on a substantial increase in the demand for labor, and the price of labor power rose accordingly, the propagandists of capitalism began a deliberate campaign of intimidation

in which they confused supply and demand with inflation, using the latter as a scareword to inhibit wage demands. Even capitalists became confused by these class-struggle semantics. The late Thomas I. Parkinson, president of the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States, one of the world's largest fiduciary institutions, discussed this confusion before a meeting of the National Industrial Conference Board (a kind of super-capitalist strategy board) at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, Jan. 17, 1946. He said in part:

... The propaganda boys like to take a good word like inflation and dress it up to convey a meaning quite different from that given by the dictionary. The dictionary says that inflation means a sudden increase in the volume of money. That is precisely what we're having now. . . . the professional propagandists would make us believe and in fact have succeeded in making us believe that the word inflation means rises in prices and in wages which in fact are only the symptoms of the disease. Inflation is really debasement of currency. That we have with us. The rise in prices is the consequence . . .

Later, in the same speech, Mr. Parkinson reiterated the point:

Rises in prices are not inflation. Consequent demands for increased wages are not inflation. The inflation is in the debasement of the currency. The increase of this vast amount of what the people in this country use for money creates the pressure under which prices are bound to rise and, when they rise, labor is bound to demand increased means of meeting the higher price level.

But, how is debasement of the currency accomplished today?

The process is more round-about than it was, say, in Germany in the 1920s when the printing press was resorted to and mark notes were printed in fantastic denominations. It is accomplished in the U.S. today by financing deficits in the federal budget by means of loans from the banks. Capitalist governments nowadays incur huge and frequent deficits. They are the consequence of the fantastic cost of preparing for and waging capitalism's wars, on the one hand, and of tax policies that seek to shift the burden for these wars from the shoulders of the present generation of capitalists to future generations, on the other. There are, of course, other reasons for the tremendous rise in the cost of maintaining the capitalists' executive committee, the State, including the proliferation of the political bureaucracy, but war is by far the biggest item of the budget.

It wouldn't do, of course, to finance these deficits with printing press money today. Therefore a more complicated procedure, less subject to detection, is employed. This is the way Robert B. Anderson, President Eisenhower's Secretary of Treasury, explained the procedure to a meeting of the Associated Press in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, April 20, 1959:

The fact that fiscal matters are little understood — even by some rather prominent and otherwise well-informed people — was brought home to me one day when a visitor in my office remarked: "You talk of the dangers of monetization of the debt. You know I just don't believe there is such a danger. Probably because I don't understand what monetization of the debt means!"

And I said this to my visitor: "Suppose I [as Secretary of the Treasury] wanted to write checks of \$100,000,000 starting tomorrow morning, but the Treasury was out of money. If I should call up a bank and say, 'Will you loan me \$100,000,000 at 3½ per cent interest for six months if I send you over a note to that effect,' the banker would probably say, 'Yes, I will.'"

"But when I send him the note, where would he get the \$100,000,000 with which to credit the account of the United States Treasury? Would he take it from your account [or] someone else's? Certainly not. He would merely create that much money, subject to reserve requirements, by crediting our account in the sum and accepting the government's note as an asset. And when I had finished writing checks for \$100,000,000, the operation would have added that sum effectively to the money supply. Now certainly that approaches the same degree of monetization as if I had called down to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and said, 'Please print me up \$100,000,000 worth of greenbacks so that I can start paying them back tomorrow.'"

Thus, by these means, the currency supply in the United States has been inflated from \$39 billion in 1940 to \$94 billion in 1945 and an additional \$16 billion between 1945 and 1950. The expansion of the money supply has continued since, though at a more moderate rate. As the *Wall Street Journal* put it, March 30, 1959:

The conclusion thus seems inescapable that bank-financed government deficits are the primary cause of inflation, whatever other contributory causes there may be. After all, no entity except the government can in the first instance control the level of the money supply.

One point more. The question is debated endlessly — are we or are we not on the gold standard? The question is raised by the fact that since 1933 it has been unlawful for Americans to possess monetary gold (except in numismatic collections). That is, since 1933 we have not been able to convert currency to gold. But what this means is that we are not on the gold *conversion* standard. Otherwise the dollar is *backed* by a reserve of gold as it always was. And the First National City Bank in its *Monthly Economic Letter*, January, 1964, in an annual survey of the world's monetary gold, stated flatly:

The United States and other leading nations have no thought of removing gold from its place as the ultimate monetary reserve.

We began with the question: *Why have the money prices of commodities not fallen in accord with the decline in the value of commodities?*

The answer, summed up, is that the cheapening of commodities, including the commodity labor power, is concealed or offset by the debasement of the currency.

Will there be money under Socialism? As we have

seen, money came into the world to facilitate the exchange of commodities. But Socialism will replace *production for sale and profit*—production, that is, of commodities—with *production for use*. There will be no need for a measure of value or medium of exchange which itself possesses intrinsic value. Accordingly, there will be no money under Socialism. In the beginning, the Socialist Republic will doubtless find it necessary to use labor time vouchers in the distribution of that part of social wealth designed for individual consumption. Workers will get back, after certain deductions for social expenses, as much as they have contributed in labor time to the social store. Computers will be used for this social bookkeeping operation, minimizing the human effort employed. Later, in Marx's words, when "all the springs of social wealth

flow more abundantly," society will inscribe on its banners: "From everyone according to his faculties, to everyone according to his needs!" ("The Gotha Program.")

Reading Assignment:

"The Truth About Inflation" by Arnold Petersen

Self-Testing Questions

1. Explain the difference between the operation of supply and demand and real inflation.
2. Why did the U.S. capitalists adopt the line that a rise in prices was "inflation"?
3. Karl Marx said in "Value, Price and Profit": "All past history proves that whenever such a depreciation of money occurs, the capitalists are on the alert to seize this opportunity for defrauding the workman." How is this done?

18. THE SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY: ORGANIZATION AND DISCIPLINE

Many persons, disturbed by the menacing direction history is taking, who are attracted to the Socialist Labor Party by the soundness of the Party's logic, its forthrightness, the irrefutable nature of its arguments and its Marxist integrity, begin their inquiry into the Party itself with the question: "But whom have you got for leaders?" We resist the temptation to dwell on the social conditioning that prompts this question. Obviously, it stems from the view that for a movement embracing large numbers of people to get anywhere it must have a few individuals "at the top" to do its thinking. Those who hold this view have failed to grasp the most essential, the most basic principle underlying the Socialist revolution now pending. This is the principle stressed in Lessons 1 through 5 that (in the language of Marx and Engels) "*the emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself.*" This supremely important principle implies, among other things, mass enlightenment. It implies, in De Leon's pithy summary (see Lesson 3), that "the proletarian army of emancipation cannot consist of a dumb driven herd. The very idea is a contradiction in terms."

The Socialist Labor Party is no "dumb driven herd." It is no band of sheep that must be led by "leaders." Its stress on Socialist *education*, on the policy summed up in the words "educate first—organize afterward," has given it a firmly grounded, enlightened membership, a membership that knows what it wants, where it is going and how it is going to get there. It has officers, true, but they are not "leaders" in the popular meaning of that word. With its enlightened membership, and with an organizational structure that gives to every individual member a voice and vote on all questions involving policy, principle and procedure, the Socialist Labor Party is a robust democracy in the best sense of that often misrepresented word.

The Socialist Labor Party long ago learned the lesson of *organization*. Taken one at a time, sticks are easily broken. But tied closely together in a bundle they have great strength and toughness. Unity is vital, and, for a party of Socialism, unity must mean agreement among its members on principle and program. Ask a Socialist Labor Party member in San Francisco a question concerning Socialism. Ask the same question of a

member in New York or Milwaukee or St. Petersburg, Fla. In each case you will get substantially the same answer. The phrasing will vary but the logic will be the same. This is not because Socialist Labor Party members learn by rote; there are no catechisms in SLP education. Rather, it is because, starting from the same principles and premises, the reasoning of SLP members leads logically to the same conclusions.

But unity demands that the organization itself have certain powers that we call powers of discipline. Discipline is associated in many minds with a military organization in which the ranks are absolutely subordinate to the decisions and orders of superior officers. Military discipline requires that the ranks be automatons and that their obedience be unquestioning. It is the discipline of totalitarianism. It has nothing in common with the essential self-discipline of the Socialist Labor Party, the discipline required to maintain Socialist unity, hence the discipline essential to the achievement of the goal devoutly desired by all who are in the movement.

This is the way Daniel De Leon defined the discipline of the SLP:

In a political party of Socialism the word discipline has its twofold application. First, the discipline of obedience to facts, and obedience to the rules and regulations that the facts prescribe for the realization of the Socialist aim. This is the discipline of education. It is not, nor can it be, produced by party legislation. It is the product of correct training. Necessary to it are unity of purpose, unity of method. The Socialist movement cannot be all things to all men; it can be only one thing, and to only one class—the working class.

Second, discipline also implies the power of the party to visit, with censure or expulsion as punishments, infractions or offenses against the Party's rules or principles. Rigid adherence to party principles and tactics being necessary to Socialist success, transgressions against the Party must be met with punishment according to the gravity of the offense. Membership in the Party being voluntary, and the discipline being self-imposed, he who subscribes to the Party's ethics does so, not as one yielding submission to imposed authority, but as one bowing to the necessity and desire of maintaining strict adherence to principle and for orderly government in Party affairs.

Discipline in this, its twofold application, is a recognition that knowledge is power and that in union there is strength.

So discipline in the SLP is both the power to apply disciplinary action to members who violate the rules and principles to which they themselves freely subscribed, and self-discipline. Self-discipline is indeed the product of education. But in the development of a

capacity for self-discipline the SLP member also experiences a growth or maturing of character. For the SLP, with the enlightenment it imparts on the forces that motivate men and movements, gives to the individual basic principles that guide him in all his thoughts and actions, and enable him to control and subordinate his ego. Discussing this point a number of years ago, the late Charles J. Mercer, long a prominent member of the Party in Connecticut, wrote:

It is the lack of self-discipline, the lack of purification of one's mind and action to principle, organization and goal [that cause some members to fall by the wayside]. This trinity must be sacred to any true revolutionist. To me it seems, looking back over the past 45 years, that this lack of clarified concept of classconscious activity has been the stumbling block of so many. The curse of personal egotism, especially in a budding agitator, inevitably leads him to disaster unless quickly brought under his own self-discipline. And, alas, what all these egotists fail to comprehend is that the more one spends himself in the service to the principle, the organization and goal, the more he expands his higher qualities; the more fully he lives and has his being.

"The principle and the organization," said De Leon, "are one."

In the Socialist Labor Party this is a concept of paramount importance. It has played a leading role in sustaining the remarkable integrity and vitality of this organization since 1890, and this in the face of popular indifference, hostility and adversity at that. Every new applicant for membership is required to understand thoroughly its implications.

They are not difficult to grasp. The soundest program of Socialist emancipation would be useless without an organization to spread and teach it. And for one to argue that he is all in favor of the program but that at the same time he is dead set against the organization is plainly contradictory. The well-grounded SLP man does not make this mistake. And he looks upon the man who does make it as an enemy, not of the organization alone, but of the principle, too, protests to the contrary notwithstanding. The principle and the organization are *one*, and he treats them as one. That is, he defends the Party as the embodiment and the indispensable disseminator of the principle.

In this connection, students are urged to read and study Socialist Labor Party history, much of which deals with the successful defense of the Party against vainglorious attempts by enemies and disrupters to wreck it. ("Daniel De Leon: The Man and His Work," a symposium, "Socialist Labor Party, 1890-1930," by Henry Kuhn and Olive M. Johnson, and "Daniel De Leon, Social Architect," Volumes I and II, by Arnold Petersen, are some of the important works relating Party history. Much vital and instructive Party history is also to be found in National Convention

Proceedings, several volumes of which are in print and on public sale.)

Thus, across the years, with the acquisition of more and more experience, the membership of the Socialist Labor Party has revised and improved the Party's democratic constitution. Yet it has never deceived itself into imagining that constitutional provisions alone could protect it against anarchistic enemies. In the last analysis only a devoted, enlightened, well-grounded membership could do that. As De Leon made this point:

The SLP is not merely teaching Socialism; it is not merely "setting the example of the sturdiness that is needed";—the SLP is doing something else besides: it is placing the movement where it is becoming out of the power of any individual or set of them to harm or derail it. This is essential. Some through vanity, others through malevolence, others in pursuit of petty self there ever will be who are attracted by a revolutionary movement. Their qualities render them dangerous. There are no such things as constitutional provisions against such anarchistic elements. Nothing will protect a movement against such small souls but its own robustness.

Such is the organization for which this study course in scientific Socialism supplies an introduction.

This course was designed to teach the fundamentals of Marxism, to serve, that is, as the introduction to a continuing study of this science. For no Socialist should ever fall into the error of believing that he knows enough, or that he need study no more. As an SLP document that is handed to new members puts it:

"Reading maketh a full man." So says the philosopher. Constant reading of Socialist scientific literature will make a full SLP man. Acquire the reading habit. Once acquire that habit and no study will ever seem difficult or irksome. Understanding increases, and with that we effect in a large measure our emancipation from the bondage of our tyrannical ego.

But there must also be a time for reflection. It is necessary to THINK, to organize the knowledge acquired. "Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much; wisdom is humble that he knows no more." We do not seek to develop mere book-worms or barren philosophers. Men [and women] of action is the need of the hour."

It were a pity that the knowledge of scientific Socialism be acquired and not put to use in the service of our class. Much is lost then. But it is not the movement alone that is the loser; the individual who deprives the movement of his enlightened devotion loses also. As Daniel De Leon, who gave of his energies and genius without stint, put it:

"We count him happy whose lot is to contribute his efforts to help forward the banner of the proletariat to final victory—the Socialist or Industrial Republic. In mill, in mine, on railroad, wherever workers are exploited, the Socialist Labor Party adherents, conscious of their class distinction and the obligation it imposes upon them, are manfully striving against the forces of capitalism, whose continued triumph will, through ruin, lead back to imperialistic barbarism.

"To aid in the full-orbed constructive work that is the essential task of a political party of Socialism, and with abiding faith in the proletariat, we urge the clear heads and sturdy hearts of the land to join the Socialist Labor Party."

Reading Assignment:

"Marxism versus Soviet Despotism" by Arnold Petersen

This document is assigned reading for this final installment of our home study course because it rounds out an important

aspect of Socialism today—the position of the SLP on the Russian Revolution and the Soviet bureaucratic system today. We suggest that you read first the article "The Russian Situation," printed as an appendix. This article first appeared in the WEEKLY PEOPLE, Nov. 24, 1917, immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution. Then read the address, "Marxism versus Soviet Despotism"—and reread "The Russian Situation." This is a prime example of Socialist prescience, of historical analysis utilizing Marx's materialist conception of history.

The End

STUDY, THINK, ACT!

No serious, thinking person will ever fall into the error of believing that he knows enough—that he need study no more. Not only must we continue to study the new in order to broaden our knowledge and acquire fresh viewpoints, but we must study and reread the Socialist classics: Marx, Engels, De Leon. Every student of Socialism, everyone who wants to understand how capitalist society operates and how a better world can be built, every worker who wants to take an active part in the world-redeeming movement of Socialism ought to reread all of De Leon's works at least once or twice a year. Marx and Engels should be reread as time and opportunity permit.

"Reading maketh a full man." So says the philosopher. Constant reading of scientific Socialist literature, coupled with lofty purpose, will make a "full" Socialist emancipator. Acquire the reading habit. Once acquire that habit and no study will ever seem difficult or irksome. Understanding increases, and with that we effect in a large measure our emancipation from the bondage of our tyrannical ego.

But there must also be time for reflection. It is necessary to *think*, to organize the knowledge acquired. "Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much; wisdom is humble that he knows no more." We do not seek to develop mere book-worms or barren philosophers. Men of *action* are the need of the hour.

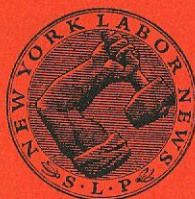
Study. Think. Act.

—ARNOLD PETERSEN

☞ This is a course in scientific Socialism - - - the Socialism of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Daniel De Leon - - - the only Socialism worthy of the name. It is basic.

☞ As for its scope, it examines three fundamentals of scientific Socialism - - - the class struggle, the materialist conception of history and Marxian economics - - - with sufficient depth to give the serious student a solid intellectual foundation for his Socialist convictions.

☞ The lessons are adapted from lectures to a Beginner's Study Class by Eric Hass, Editor of the Weekly People.



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