
Our Patriotism and Theirs.

by Morris Hillquit

Published in *The American Socialist* [Chicago], v. 3, no. 17, whole no. 209 [Nov. 4, 1918], pg. 1.

One of the charges commonly made against the Socialists in this campaign is that they are devoid of patriotism. To this charge we plead NOT GUILTY. We yield to no man in the sense of our true patriotism. Patriotism means the love of one's country, and love of the country means nothing if it does not mean love of the people. True patriotism expresses itself in honest efforts to enhance the happiness and welfare of the great masses of the people, to help them in their struggles for more food, better homes, higher education, larger freedom, brighter, happier lives.

Patriotism is a very much abused term. In this campaign the country is infested with a swarm of professional patriots, including men who are aspiring to the highest office in the land, men who have occupied the most exalted positions in the gift of the nation and other great national luminaries. They travel throughout the country prating about "true Americanism," they wave the American flag with rivaling frenzy, they flatter our national vanity, they appeal to our basest instincts, they foment racial antagonism at home and pave the ground for strife and war with foreign nations. Their agitation is harmful to the people, it is grossly unpatriotic.

Our leading citizens, who march in the front ranks of "preparedness" parades, but build their fortunes upon the misery and oppression of their fellowmen, they, too, are thoroughly unpatriotic.

The Socialists alone stand for true and enlightened patriotism. The essence of true American patriotism has been proclaimed to the whole

world 140 years ago in terms so clear and in tones so ringing that it holds as true now as ever, and the political pygmies of today may well save themselves the trouble of amending it.

I refer to the sublimest instrument produced by American genius, the Declaration of Independence.

Let me quote from it:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or 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.

Life, Liberty, and Happiness for all human beings, including all workers, that is the great goal of organized labor and of the Socialist movement.

The worker's life counts for nothing in our cruel industrial system. It is being ruthlessly crushed and destroyed in the mines, mills, and factories by violent accidents. It is being steadily sapped by inhuman overexertion.

His liberty is at best the liberty to choose and change his master. There can be no true liberty in an industrial despotism.

His pursuit of happiness is often a vain pursuit of a job to keep his body and soul together.

For the ruling classes of our country, the Tories of the 20th Century, the Declaration of Independence has become an antiquated, meaningless “scrap of paper.” To them government exists not to ensure Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, but to protect Property, Authority, and the Pursuit of Profits.

The government and system maintained by American capitalism have become destructive of the lives, liberties, and happiness of the workers and the great masses of the people, and with the founders of this republic we hold that it is the right and the duty of the people “to alter or abolish” this system, and “to institute a new government”; a government organized to maintain human life and promote human happiness, a government based on industrial as well as political liberty, a true popular government for the benefit of the whole people.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2006. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.