



EASY LESSONS IN SOCIALISM

WILLIAM·H·LEFFINGWELL



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PREFACE.

In these short lessons the writer has endeavored to give a concise exposition of the fundamentals, and at the same time write in a simple, conversational style. No "dictionary" words are used. The series is intended as a "starter." It will serve as a foundation for a more extended study of socialism.

Some of the clerks, correspondents, bookkeepers, stenographers, foremen and the better paid wage earners, men who get "salaries," may think from my statements about the working class that they are not included in the socialist proposition. So many of them think that a workingman is one of those unfortunate beings who has dirty hands and face and who wears shabby clothes; all others, they think, belong to the "middle class," meaning by this that they are a little above the average in intelligence.

The term "working class," used as the socialists use it, includes every man, woman or child who works for a wage or a salary.

There is no class of working men whose condition is worse than the clerical workers—the so-called intellectual class—and the sooner they abandon the idea that they do not belong to the working class and join hands with their brothers, the mechanics and day laborers (the real producers) the better it will be for all. Sooner or later they will be forced to do this by economic conditions.

EASY LESSONS IN SOCIALISM.

LESSON NO. 1.

For the sake of clearness of thought, the subjects will be divided into propositions.

Proposition (a): Since the beginning of civilization the history of all society has been a history of class struggles.

You very often hear a man say, when you talk socialism to him: "You can never do it; this system has always been and it always will be." Nothing could be further from the truth. This system has only been in existence for four or five hundred years, and in some parts of the world this capitalist system has not yet appeared. But there is one thing at "always has been" since the beginning of civilization, and that is the class struggle. When people began to emerge from barbarism into civilization the class struggles began. Then the workers were chattel slaves. They belonged, body and soul, to their masters, who did whatever they saw fit with them. The next stage was feudalism. Under this stage the worker belonged to the land and the land belonged to the lord. The next stage of society was capitalism, under which we are living at the present time. Under this system the worker works for a wage and the tools belong to his master, the capitalist.

How all these changes came about would make

a long and intricate story. Suffice it to say that every advance was made by a struggle between classes. It would be well to look into this further. There are lots of books written on the subject which are very interesting.

Proposition (b): The present struggle is between the employing class, or the capitalists, and the employed class, or the workingmen.

How hard it is to make some people believe this. Especially workers in America. In this glorious land of freedom there are no classes, yet the very people who tell us this are continually talking about the "capitalist class" and the "working class."

Were you ever awakened from a nice, comfortable sleep, about 5:30 in the morning by an infernal machine, known as an alarm clock? This impish device says: "Get up, you slave, get up. Go to work. If you are late you will have to hunt another master or starve." Doesn't this convince you that the other class holds you in bondage?

If not, how about strikes and lockouts? What do these mean? They mean just what is stated above—there is a struggle continually waging between the worker and his masters, the capitalists.

"But," you say, "I'll admit some bosses are mean, but that is no reason to condemn the good ones; they are not fighting the working class."

Well, if you are not yet convinced, what you need is a taste of the blacklist. This will show

you whether or not the capitalists stick together when it comes to a struggle between their brothers' slaves and their masters. There is no capitalist good enough to employ a blacklisted man,—or at least he has not yet been found.

We will take it for granted that after you have digested this thoroughly we can give it to you a little stronger—let us take

Proposition (c): The interests of the working class and the interests of the capitalist class are diametrically opposed.

This is so simple that any one ought to understand it. But every one doesn't.

The most important thing to a working man is what? A good living, is it not? To get this he must have good wages and he is continually trying to "better himself" along these lines. This is natural.

What is the most important consideration to a capitalist? Big profits. You will certainly admit that he isn't in business for his health or yours. He wants profit and he wants it badly and in order to get as much profit as possible he hires men as cheaply as he can. Did you ever have a boss say to you: "Now really, my dear fellow, you can't live on \$6 a week, I think I had better pay you \$25 a week." Well I guess you didn't. He usually says, when you plead for \$9 a week and tell him you can't possibly support your family on less: "Well, good bye, I can hire barrels of men at \$7." And then you say that you

interests and his are mutual and identical. Go 'way, you're only fooling.

Just put this down in your note book; you want as much wages as possible and the boss wants to pay you as little as possible. Don't let any one tell you differently, for it cannot be proved.

LESSON NO. 2.

Proposition (a): All political parties are the representatives of class interests.

This is a very difficult thing to make people believe, but once their eyes are opened to its truth, "the beginning of the end is near." In these short lessons it is impossible for me to give you very abundant proof of this, so I wish merely to suggest a few thoughts, leaving you to do a little investigating for yourself.

Today there are two "great" political parties. In America? Yes, and in England, France, Germany and every other civilized country. The names are different in different countries, and in some countries these parties are divided into several factions; but the class interests are the same. One is the party of the large capitalist and the other is the party of the small capitalist.

A good way to show the class interests of a party is to notice the stand it takes on questions of taxation and of laws of an industrial nature.

Take the "income tax" for instance. The Democratic party (the party of the small capitalist), favored this, but the Republican party (the party of the large capitalist) opposed it. The amount exempt from taxation was \$5,000; all above was taxed. Therefore only the large capitalists were to be taxed.

Today the "trust question" is uppermost in the minds of the people. The Democratic party says trusts are bad, very bad—they ought to be abolished. Why? Because they crush out the middle man, the little capitalist. The Republican party says they are good, a sign of progress. They cheapen production. They are enabled, through the large factories, to increase production with less labor cost than before. These two attitudes show plainly the class interests of the two parties.

Now YOU are neither a capitalist, great or small, are you? No; but you perform a very useful function. You are the fool workingman who makes these parties "Great." Suppose all the big capitalists voted for one party, all the little capitalists for another, and the workingmen for a third. How many "great" parties would there be? Only one. The others wouldn't amount to much, would they?

Proposition (b): Most of the crime and disease and all of the poverty are caused by the system.

"The poor ye have with you always"—that is, so long as you have the rich.

In America enough food and clothing can be produced to supply the entire world; coal and iron in sufficient quantities to last a thousand generations. There is land enough to give each of us a farm, machinery enough to produce all we desire, and labor enough to make the task very simple. Yet thousands die of hunger, many freeze to death, many are forced to steal—and

often murder—on account of their poverty. The extreme poverty causes drunkenness and disease, and crime is rampant. Is this not a terrible condition, when all might be happy and comfortable? Something must be wrong. What is it? All of the land, mines and the means of production (factories, etc.) are owned by one class of men. The other class is therefore compelled to contribute four-fifths of what it produces to the owning class in order to get a chance to live. Pretty system, isn't it? You see what it leads to.

Proposition (c): Any political party which does not seek to abolish the present system, stands for all the evils caused by the system.

If the system is wrong, it should be changed. If a man is hungry, he tries to feed himself. If he is cold, he tries to get warm. He knows what the cause of his misery is, and he tries to remove that cause. If the cause of all our evils is the private ownership of the means of life, why not abolish the cause? That is simple enough for any one to understand. But if certain politicians tell you that the system is all right, when you know and they know perfectly well that it is all wrong, the logical conclusion of their arguments is that it is proper that we should have crime, disease and poverty. Many of them even come out openly and argue that there are things which cannot be helped. Are they? These politicians and the capitalists have very good reasons for not wanting to abolish the evils mentioned. They know that the evils of this system are but the

effects of the system, and that the effects cannot be abolished except by removing the cause; and as they are benefitted by the cause (private ownership of the means of life) they do not want the cause removed.

If capitalism, whether under the administration of the democrats or republicans, starves you and your family and grinds your children up in the mills for profits, and you do not approve of such things, it is up to you to make a change. There is only one political party that wants to change the system, and that party is the Socialist party. All others, by what other name they are known, or whatever reforms they propose, are capitalistic parties or factions thereof; for if they do not want to abolish capitalism, they want capitalism and must consequently justify its evils, while we poor devils must endure them.

Proposition (d): The present system benefits only the capitalist class, the working class bearing the brunt of all its evils. Therefore, it is the mission of the working class to alter the system so that they may be benefited.

This simply means letting the workingmen look after their own interests. They are in the majority and they can have anything they want if they know how to go at it. There is only one right way, and it is as follows: first, unite into a political party organized strictly on class lines, then capture the powers of government by means of the ballot. Then change the system under which we are living from a system of private

ownership to one of collective ownership. Such a party is already in existence and its votes are multiplying very rapidly. It is the Socialist party.

Now, to close, if you do not believe what I have said to be true, or if you do not agree with my conclusions, can you answer the following questions with "Yes?"

Does it benefit you to be robbed? Do you like it?

Would it harm you to get the full value of what you produce?

Is it right for a class which does nothing useful to live in luxury?

Is it right for a class which produces everything to live in poverty?

LESSON NO. 3.

Proposition (a): Production under the present system is for profit, and not for use, the use value of the thing produced being a secondary consideration.

That the above statement is true is apparent to even the dullest of minds. Can you think of any good reason, for instance, why an article of food should be adulterated? Did you ever notice an article of clothing that was made of the cheapest of shoddy, or a piece of furniture made of cull lumber? Is this not because the manufacturer can make a little more profit than he could had he used the genuine article? I think you will agree with me on this score.

Proposition (b): Profit is the difference between the cost of producing and distributing and the selling price; and signifies that the worker received only a small portion of the value of his product.

This proposition is a little harder. The workingman who produces an article, or rather the set of workingmen who produce an article, receive a portion of the value of their product in wages—but only a portion—Uncle Sam says it is about 17 per cent. Is the rest all profit? No. Besides the profit of the capitalist in whose factory the article is made, rent and interest, advertising and several other men's profits enter in, but nevertheless a large portion of it is either rent,

interest, or profit; and no matter by what name it is known, the person who received it did no useful work as an equivalent. Do you see where YOU get off on a deal like this? The working class receives 17 per cent of the value of its product and of the balance, what is not wasted in useless labor goes into the pockets of the capitalist class.

Proposition (c): Profits are not made unless goods are sold. The workers, who only receive part of the value of their products in wages, cannot buy it all; therefore foreign markets must be secured or overproduction and a consequent panic occurs.

Read that over twice. Profits are not made unless goods are sold. It would not make any difference if the workers created enough to last them a million years, if the boss could not sell the products he could not make profits and consequently the products would be of no value to him. He wasn't worried very much, when you were making these things, as to whether YOU would get YOUR share of them or not—that is, it was not your personal interests he was looking after. But he was worried pretty much about selling them to someone. Now, suppose you produced an article that sold for \$1 and you got seventeen cents for making it (this is the average percentage). Don't you see you would have to produce six of them before you could buy one for yourself? Who would buy the other five? Well, that's the all-consuming question.

For many years, about half of the workingmen in the United States were producing things and the other half were building factories, machinery, railroads, etc. But this work is almost finished; and the result is, most of them are producing things, and producing them in such large quantities that "we" (meaning our capitalist friends), have to pick fights with foreign nations and force them to buy the surplus. At any rate the goods have to be sold somewhere else—the workingmen here cannot buy them. Every ten years or so a panic takes place—the market is glutted. Then people have to starve because they have produced too much food—to freeze because there is too much fuel; and a great many other wonderful things occur. It usually takes three or four years for the country to get over the panic; then everybody starts all over again and the same old game is played.

Proposition (d): All civilized nations are capitalistic nations and hence subject to the same conditions. This accounts for the repeated wars of conquest upon the partially civilized nations.

I think that statement is plain enough. By a slight glance over the daily papers you will notice that Germany, England, France and others are all in about the same boat as the United States. All are striving for foreign markets.

Proposition (c): Foreign markets being exhausted, overproduction will bring upon the capitalist countries a cessation of business, and capitalism will fall.

Now, I presume you have followed my logic pretty carefully.

First, I proved to you that the capitalists were in business for profit, not for your good as many suppose.

Second, I showed you that the worker only gets 17 per cent of his product (see Census Bulletin No. 150).

Third, that goods not sold in this country must be sold to foreign countries.

Fourth, that all civilized countries are in the same straits.

Now, I want you to think carefully. What would happen if the foreign markets should become exhausted? Perhaps you think this is impossible. To say the least there is a limit to them, isn't there? But to get right down to hard facts, every capitalist nation is much worried over this subject. They are all willing to slaughter millions of you poor fools as well as millions of other fellows in order to get foreign possessions or colonies. See them scramble after China, the Philippines, Cuba, etc., etc. Doesn't this make it very plain to you that a crisis is coming? When it is to arrive no one can say; but that it is very close at hand, no one can deny. When foreign markets are exhausted, business will cease and capitalism will fall. What can prevent it? Nothing—nothing under the sun can prevent capitalism from falling. And there is only one thing that can prevent you poor fellows who create all

the wealth from starving to death, and that is Socialism. If it comes to a show down, I rather think you will choose Socialism before you will starve. How about it?

LESSON NO. 4.

Proposition (a): A complete revolution in the method of producing has taken place in the last fifty years, improved machines, increased division of labor and large corporations, making it possible for the workingmen to produce nine times as much as they did fifty years ago. (See Census Bulletin No. 150.)

There was a time, up to about fifty years ago, when machines were few in number, crude and comparatively inferior, and the factories were very small. Hundreds upon hundreds of small shops were in existence and hand work was the rule and not the exception as it is today. In those days the workingman got a much larger proportion of his product than he does today, but he did not produce nearly so much. Just about this time the invention of machinery received an impetus on account of the extensive use of steam as a motive power. Large factories were built up and there was an increased division of labor, which continued gradually improving until today the workman is given a simple task to perform and kept at it. At present the division of labor, together with the use of machinery, has been carried to a very high degree of perfection. For instance, there are over sixty separate and distinct tasks in the making of a pair of shoes, while

formerly this work was done by one man. This division of labor, combined with the improved machinery and large factory organization, makes it possible for the workingman to produce nine times as much as he did in 1850.

Proposition (b): This wonderful change has been brought about by the changing of the method of production from an individual or competitive basis to a social or co-operative basis.

As noted before, there has been a complete revolution in the manner of producing in the last half century. Fifty years ago, nearly everything was done by hand; today almost everything is produced by machinery. The present wonderful productivity could never have been possible under the old handicraft or individual system. While it now takes over sixty men to make a pair of shoes, as compared with one in the olden times, these sixty men can produce many times more shoes than an equal number of men could have done on the individual plan. We now do everything co-operatively. The large department stores are co-operative institutions, the immense factories are co-operative—in fact everything is co-operative nowadays in production. However, when it comes to distributing the wealth thus produced by the workers, the capitalist class, who comprise 15 per cent of the population, receives 83 per cent; and the working class, who comprise 85 per cent of the population, get 17 per cent. Not much co-operation there.

Proposition (c): But while this change has

taken place in producing, the workers are only partially benefited by it, the capitalist class reaping the largest rewards in increased profits.

Think of the progress that has been made in the past half century. Now there are electric lights, electric cooking apparatus, electric heating, telephone, sanitary plumbing, houses of a grandeur such as was never known before, clothing of the finest fabrics and furniture of all kinds better made than ever before. In fact at the present time it is possible for a man to live in absolute comfort and comparative luxury. You produced these things—that is you did your share, together with your fellow workingmen. What do you get? Poverty, tumble down shacks that are not fit for a dog to live in, with no sanitary plumbing, no conveniences, no telephone, your clothes are shoddy, your furniture is cheap and poorly made, and your food is adulterated to such a great extent that you are surprised if you discover an article of food that is pure. Who is it, then, that has these fine things? The capitalist class, the class that owns the factories, mills, mines, etc., etc.—the class that appropriates your product after you toil so hard. They do all the traveling, they have all the conveniences, and you get most of the discomforts.

Proposition (d): Therefore it is evident that it is the private ownership of the means of production and distribution which prevents the work-

ingman from receiving the full social value of his product.

Now, is it not plain to you that if the class you belong to, the working class, which produces everything, lives in poverty, while the capitalist class, the class which owns the machines, the factories, the mills, mines, railroads and land, live in luxury, that the cause of your poverty must be in the ownership of the means of life? This capitalist class owns everything: but they offer you the opportunity to produce wealth for them and then they give you a miserable pittance, barely enough to allow you to exist. They would not give you even this, only you would starve otherwise, and therefore would not be able to produce any more wealth for them.

Oh, what a chump you are! Just think of a man who will work all his life making things for other people and taking nothing in return for himself except enough barely to keep him alive. How foolish it sounds when you come to think about it in the right light!

But I will not call you down very hard. If you will promise to vote for a change of the system, I will consider that you have a little common sense left. You see, it won't do for me to call you too many hard names, because I used to be that kind of a fool myself once. I used to think the boss was very kind to me to give me enough to live on. Now, since I have my eyes open I realize how kind I have been to him. For many years have I given him everything I have pro-

duced. The only thing that worries me now is how long YOU will keep me from getting the full share of my product. You are the only obstacle in the way. Until YOU vote the Socialist Party ticket, too, I shall have to stand it. ;

LESSON NO. 5.

Propositions.

(a): *It has been seen that all progress since the dawn of civilization has been a series of class struggles; that the present struggle is between the capitalist and the worker; and that the interests of these two classes are diametrically opposed.*

(b): *That political parties are the representatives of class interests, and any party which stands for the continuation of the profit system is essentially a capitalistic party, no matter what its name may be, or what reforms it may propose.*

(c): *That the profit system must of necessity fall.*

(d): *That the revolution which has taken place in production and which has greatly increased the product of each worker, has been brought about by co-operative methods and that the only thing which prevents the worker from living in comfort and security, instead of his present poverty, is the private ownership of the means of production and distribution.*

Therefore:

The Socialist Party, a party of the workingmen, organized strictly on class lines, proposes to abolish this system before it brings disaster upon the people and institute a co-operative commonwealth by the following methods, which are the only ones possible:

First. Gain control of the powers of government and exercise them in behalf of the working class.

Second. Operate all industries collectively, giving the worker the full social value of his product.

The above things we have learned in the four previous lessons. Much more could have been said on the subjects covered in each lesson, but it was the writer's intention to make these lessons short and simple.

Now that you have mastered the subject, what do you think of socialism? Count the points in its favor, shown in the first four lessons:

Lesson No. 1 shows that the socialist movement is evolutionary in character, and is based upon a most vital principle—the class struggle. That's no idle dream nor fanciful theory—it is a fact, a cold, stubborn fact.

Lesson No. 2 shows the necessity of the workingman breaking away from the old capitalistic parties and joining a party which has for its purpose the abolition of the damnable system under which we are living, which causes so much misery and poverty. Every vote that is cast for *any other party* (and this is not an egotistical boast, but a logical conclusion) simply forges another link in the fetters which hold the workingman in bondage.

Lesson No. 3 shows that it is impossible for the present system to last for any great length of time and that sooner or later it will fall. Its

doom is certain. And there is a very great possibility of there being bloodshed and internal war, brought upon us by the capitalist class, through the ignorance of the workers. If the people are sufficiently educated as to the socialist solution this period of disorder may be greatly shortened and perhaps prevented altogether. But should ignorance prevail, it is hard to say how long it will last.

Lesson No. 4 shows that the cause of the evils of this system is the private ownership of the means of production and distribution—the means of life, in short—and proves that the only way to get rid of the effects is to remove the cause.

After carefully considering all these things you must certainly come to the conclusion that socialism is not only not impracticable, but it is inevitable; and that it is not only your privilege to vote for the Socialist Party, but it is your DUTY. It is a duty that you owe to your wife and family, and to yourself. It is not only your duty to vote right, but it is also your duty to do all possible to induce others to do likewise; for should the crisis come before the people, or at least a very large majority of them thoroughly understand that the only possible remedy is socialism, the vast army of unemployed, starving workingmen are liable to cause a good deal of damage—perhaps provoke a bloody internal war. YOU can help the socialists to solve the matter peaceably.

The very best way to help bring socialism is by

the united efforts of thousands; *ergo*: join the party; find out where there is a branch in your neighborhood, and join it at once. If every man who votes the ticket even now should join the party organization and work in harmony with his comrades, socialism would be very near at hand.

THE END.

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GREAT AMERICAN FORTUNES.

From time immemorial paid biographers, parasitical panegyrists, preachers and Sunday school teachers have sung the praises of the rich and wealthy citizens of the land; muckrakers have muckraked Rockefeller and members of the Standard Oil Company group until a magazine no longer sells merely because it is publishing stories of graft and corruption; books have been published by the score telling magnificent and marvelous tales concerning the holders of the great fortunes of the United States, but it has fallen to the lot of Gustavus Myers to write the first full and authentic account of the actual sources of these vast accumulations of wealth and to disclose the methods used in their acquisitions. His "History of Great American Fortunes," in three volumes, published by Kerr & Company, of Chicago, marks an era in the field of economic research.

Mr. Myers is unlike most authors in that he has no axe to grind, he has no philosophy to preach, he has no monthly check from capitalist or corporation. He is a searcher after truth, and, unlike most writers, he does not hesitate to publish the facts when he finds them, be they good or bad. The result is a three-volume work filled to the brim with startling disclosures and surprising statements based upon Congressional and State documents,

court records and various other authoritative sources. At no stage of his narrative does Mr. Myers mince his words; he bores directly into the heart of his subject and leaves nothing undone to show that our parents and teachers have filled our minds with falsehoods of the most baseless sort when we were children by telling us that as we grew up we could become wealthy and still retain our ideals of honesty, in both theory and practice. Through three volumes containing more than a thousand pages Mr. Myers gives us a most depressing story of the graft, bribery, corruption, avarice, debauchery and chicanery lying behind the great American fortunes. Truthfully, the story is a sickening recital of man's inhumanity to man in his greedy pursuit of wealth, but it is nevertheless a work which should be read by every American citizen be he high or low, rich or poor, naturalized or native.

Volume I, already in its second edition, tells the economic conditions prevailing during the colonial period of the United States, and of the origin and development of the large land fortunes such as those of the Astor and Marshall Field families. Volume II, also in its second edition, and Volume III, just published, deal with the great railroad fortunes of Vanderbilt, Gould, Sage, Elkins, Hill, Morgan and others. It is in this volume that the author devotes a chapter to the Pacific quartet, composed of Huntington, Crocker, Stanford and Hopkins. Future volumes are to describe the acquisition of vast railroad

properties by Harriman and the Standard Oil Company, and will also deal with those great fortunes which have grown out of the control of public franchises, mines and various manufacturing industries.

The author arrives at no conclusions as a result of his investigations, but leaves the readers to do so in accordance with the facts which he has presented. In brief, there can be but one conclusion, and that is that thrift, temperance and hard work are not the recipe for getting rich, else many millions of people who have to work hard and who are thrifty and temperate would forthwith become so. Through all fortunes large and small there runs the same heavy streak of fraud and theft, of bribery, graft and corruption. The little trader with his misrepresentation and swindling is different from the "big fellow" in degree only.

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