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## *Peter Collins vs. Socialism*

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An open letter to the Knights of Columbus of  
the City of Cleveland.

Gentlemen:

Under the auspices of your organization, last  
Thursday evening, May 21, at the Engineers Hall,  
Peter Collins delivered a lecture entitled, "The Com-  
ing Conflict or the Menace of Socialism."

In a very earnest and forcible address he pointed  
out what he deemed were serious objections to  
Socialism. We accord Mr. Collins' honesty and  
sincerity in his attack but do not agree with his  
conclusions.

Your organization we understand is both fra-  
ternal and benevolent in its objects, and a large  
proportion of your membership is composed of  
young men. We believe you are willing to listen  
to both sides of every important question and will  
welcome a brief statement of one who holds op-  
posite views of Socialism to those held by Mr.  
Collins.

As American citizens, we are alike interested in  
any plan that has as its purpose the improvement  
of living conditions for the average man. In minor  
details our methods may differ, but working with  
the same end in view, is it not possible that there  
may be many points of agreement which can be  
brought into prominence by a discussion of this  
kind?

Very truly yours,

O. K. WHEELOCK,

10906 Wade Park Ave.

Cleveland, O., May 25, 1914.

I. Statement by Mr. Collins: "Socialists denounce patriotism."

Reply: In their campaign for universal peace, Socialists do declare the interests of the workers are the same in every country where the profit system of industry prevails. Sons of the working class make up the rank and file of the world's standing armies and navies.

The cost and maintenance of these military establishments must come from the wealth production of the real producers of real wealth. As a consequence, labor furnishes the men and the money for all wars. **WHEREIN DOES LABOR BENEFIT?**

Socialism is endeavoring to educate the working class of all countries to a point where they will be intelligent enough to see that they should not fight each other simply because they happen to have been born in different countries under different flags.

Patriotism fosters a war spirit. As a sentiment it is opposed to the establishment of international peace. It is antagonistic to spirit of the scriptural declaration, "He hath made out of one blood all nations of men."

The "Red Flag" of Socialism typifies the truth of the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God.

Socialists are striving to bring about a time, described by Tennyson:

"When the war drum beats no longer,  
And the battleflags are furled,  
In the parliament of Man,  
In the Federation of the World."

Is not such a sentiment more lofty, more noble and more Christ-like than a sentiment that looks upon all men of other nations as foreigners and natural enemies?

II. Statement by Mr. Collins: "Labor would be injured, not benefited, by Socialism."

Reply: In advanced legislation, that safeguards the interests of labor, Germany leads all other countries. In Germany there are more Socialist voters than in any other country. The vote has steadily grown until it numbers more than four millions. If the growth of Socialism has benefited the wage-earner of Germany how could it injure the wage-earner of the United States? **THE INTERESTS OF LABOR ARE IDENTICAL IN ALL COUNTRIES.**

III. Statement by Mr. Collins: "Socialism stirs up strife and creates class hatred."

Reply: Again and again has the Socialist party gone on record as being opposed to all violence. Again and again has it emphasized that by the BALLOT and not the bullet must labor come into its own.

Not a month has passed by since the party in New York City went on record in regard to the labor massacre in Colorado. They declared that the profit system and not individuals were responsible for that slaughter.

They did not endorse the mourners' parade in front of 26 Broadway. Nor did they pour anathema upon the head of the heir of Standard Oil. Socialists have no quarrel with **INDIVIDUALS AS SUCH.** They may call attention from time to time to such persons as Harry Thaw and Anna Gould,

*Charles F. Edelman,  
152 Ashley St.,  
Dayton, Ohio.*

only to point out some of the living examples of the beautiful fruits of Capitalism. But every Socialist knows, that Rockefeller is as much the natural product of the profit system as the homeless hobo that stopped at your back door this morning and asked you for a handout. Analyze social conditions as a chemist would analyze a compound. Delve below the surface of things and think for yourself. What do you find? Follow what trail you will of industrial abuse of social debauchery, of business crookedness or political graft, your path will lead you to the well-spring of its source, the PROFIT SYSTEM. And it is this SYSTEM and NOT individuals that Socialism attacks.

IV. Statement by Mr. Collins: "The way to improve labor conditions is to pay higher wages."

Reply: In every line of production an increase of the labor cost is followed by an increase of the selling price of the commodity involved. Higher wages alone will not solve the problem. The great mass of producers make up the great mass of consumers as well. Along with higher wages there must come an intelligent plan by which the cost of living must be kept stationary or reduced. Otherwise an increased wage, accompanied by an increase in the selling price of the article involved, will mean no more of food, clothing and shelter for labor than it could secure before.

It is this feature of the profit system that makes it impossible for Union Labor to solve our economic problems, unless they adopt Socialism. Labor Unions DO help and can help in many useful ways. But the only scientific standard, by which the prosperity of any community of wage-earners can be measured, is by the purchasing power of the wages paid labor.

Permit an illustration: A few years ago there was a strike in the anthracite coal regions. Six weeks the miners laid down their picks and shovels. When they took them up again they had received an increase in wages amounting to six millions of dollars.

When the owners of the coal met after the strike to fix the selling price, they advanced it not only enough to cover the six millions increase of labor cost, but added eight millions of additional profit for themselves. And the union plumber, bricklayer, carpenter, machinist and every other union and non-union worker, who burned anthracite coal, paid for both increases.

V. Statement by Mr. Collins: "Socialism would destroy private property."

Reply: Socialism would destroy PRIVATE MONOPOLY. It would make it possible for every worker to INCREASE his possession of private property. Under present day conditions, the average wage-earner does not possess much private property. In Cleveland 50,000 families out of the 76,000 credited by the last census, live in rented homes. Most workingmen are receiving wages which enable them to lay but little by for a rainy day. Food, clothing and shelter for their family absorbs their income, when continuously employed. Illness or a period of forced unemployment for two weeks means privation and the charity list.

Socialism would eliminate the enormous economic waste of production and distribution, which now rests upon the back of labor. Go down town

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some morning and visit one of the skyscraping office buildings; the William-son, for example. Take an elevator to the top floor and walk down the stairs. Read the signs in gilt letters on the glass doors. "John Smith, Real Estate." "John Jones, Insurance." "John Brown, Merchandise Broker." "John White, Attorney-at-Law." What do these men produce? Their occupations are parasitic; their incomes and the rents of these immense buildings must all come out of the production of the producers of real wealth.

Did you ever see the figures of the total advertising bill in these United States? All of which adds not one single penny to the created wealth of the world.

For a quarter of a century the writer has been engaged as a traveling salesman. This occupation is parasitic, no matter how necessary it may seem under a competitive profit system. We don't send out traveling men to sell postage stamps and postal cards; yet the needs of the people for these things are supplied. Neither does the postmaster of Cleveland advertise that he carries a bigger and better stock than the postmaster of Detroit. Socialism teaches that all things that are SOCIALLY USED should be SOCIALLY OWNED. Under Socialism, a man could own an automobile but not a taxicab. He could have his private yacht, but not a steamship line. He could own half a dozen electrics, but not a trolley line. Tooth brushes and hair brushes, homes and household furniture would still remain private property. Oil and timber lands, mines and quarries, railroads and telephones would be SOCIALLY OWNED and used in common the same as our parks, our public schools and our postoffice system.

VI. Statement by Mr. Collins: "Socialism attacks the sanctity of marriage and would disrupt the home."

Reply: Probably one of the worst indictments that can be brought against Capitalism is contained in the above charge against Socialism. Let us consider a few facts. One million divorces have been granted in this country in the last ten years under Capitalism. Two million married women are wage-earners in our factories and department stores. Look over the records of our divorce courts and you will be surprised what a large percentage are based upon wife desertion and intemperance. A young husband is out of work. He is unable to secure a job for a few weeks. He becomes discouraged, deserts his family or takes to drink. Both of these results can be charged against the profit system. When it is PROFITABLE to employ labor, capital gives it a job. When it is NOT profitable, labor is fired or laid off.

Frances Williard, after years of experience in temperance work, gave it as her opinion, "THAT poverty was more the cause of intemperance than was intemperance the cause of poverty." Standing up before the National Convention at Buffalo, of the W. C. T. U., she declared her conversion to the cause of Socialism, and uttered these memorable words: "It is God's way out of the Wilderness into the Promised Land. Would that I were young again that I might give my life to its cause."

Thousands of young men remain single because of the low wages paid labor, the high cost of living and the uncertainty of continuous employment. Wives and children are compelled to take their places in the factories beside the father, in order that their home shall not be broken up.

Women marry to secure a home and support. The economic stress of

the battle for bread feeds the great army of prostitution, that horrifies and appalls. Is such a system a protection to the sanctity of marriage or the home?

VII. Statement by Mr. Collins: "Socialism is opposed to religion and a belief in God."

Reply: Robert Ingersoll was a prominent American Agnostic. He did great service for the Republican party as a political orator. Yet the fact that he was not orthodox in his religious views was never used as an argument against the Republican party. There, no doubt, are many irreligious men in the ranks of the Democratic and Progressive parties. A number of prominent European and American Socialist writers are Agnostics. On the other hand, some of the best literature of the Socialist movement has been written by Christian clergymen. For example, "Principles of Scientific Socialism," by Rev. Chas. Vail. Clergy of the Catholic faith have contributed to it. At the the last National Convention, at Indianapolis, seventeen ministers of the Gospel in charge of churches were present as delegates.

Clergymen have been elected mayors of the following cities by the Socialist party: Butte, Mont.; Berkeley, Cal.; Schenectady, N. Y. There is within the Socialist party an organization known as the Christian Socialist Fellowship. Bishop Spalding, of the Episcopal Church, was at one time at its head. Rufus W. Weeks, vice president of the New York Life Insurance Company, a man of deep religious convictions, is one of its active members. All these facts are stated simply to show that there is nothing Atheistic or Agnostic so far as Socialism itself is concerned. Its members DIFFER widely in THEIR RELIGIOUS beliefs. They AGREE in their POLITICAL FAITH. The fact is, Socialism is not a religious question at all. It is simply an economic and political issue. No questions are asked the man or woman who applies for membership in the Socialist party as to their religious belief. You will find in the ranks of the active party workers, Catholics and Protestants, Jews and Gentiles, Agnostics and Christian believers.

Thousands of devout Catholics in this country are supporting the Socialist party and voting its ticket and see nothing in its program antagonistic to their belief in God or prejudicial to their faith.

Here is the working program as adopted at the last National Convention at Indianapolis:

### **WORKING PROGRAM OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY.**

Adopted at Indianapolis May 17, 1912.

As measures calculated to strengthen the working class in its fight for the realization of its ultimate aim, the co-operative commonwealth, and to increase its power of resistance against capitalist oppression, we advocate and pledge ourselves and our elected officers to the following program:

1. The collective ownership and democratic management of railroads, wire and wireless telegraphs and telephones, express services, steamboat lines and all other social means of transportation and communication, and of all large scale industries.

2. The immediate acquirement by the municipalities, the states, or the federal government, of all grain elevators, stock yards, storage

warehouses, and other distributing agencies, in order to reduce the present extortionate cost of living.

3. The extension of the public domain to include mines, quarries, oil wells, forests and water power.

4. The further conservation and development of natural resources for the use and benefit of all the people :

(a) By scientific forestation and timber protection.

(b) By the reclamation of arid and swamp tracts.

(c) By the storage of flood waters and the utilization of water power.

(d) By the stoppage of the present extravagant waste of the soil, and of the products of mines and oil wells.

(e) By the development of highway and waterway systems.

5. The collective ownership of land wherever practicable, and in cases where such ownership is impracticable the appropriation by taxation of the annual rental value of all land held for speculation.

6. The collective ownership and democratic management of the banking and currency system.

The immediate government relief of the unemployed by the extension of all useful public works. All persons employed on such works to be engaged directly by the government under a workday of not more than eight hours, and at not less than the prevailing union wages. The government also to establish employment bureaus; to lend money to states and municipalities without interest for the purpose of carrying on public works, and to take such other measures within its power as will lessen the widespread misery of the workers caused by the misrule of the capitalist class.

The conservation of human resources, particularly of the lives and well-being of the workers and their families :

1. By shortening the workday in keeping with the increased productiveness of machinery.

2. By securing to every worker a rest period of not less than a day and a half in each week.

3. By securing a more effective inspection of workshops, factories and mines.

4. By forbidding the employment of children under 16 years of age.

5. By the co-operative organization of industries in federal penitentiaries and workshops, for the benefit of convicts and their dependents.

6. By forbidding the interstate transportation of the products of child labor, of convict labor, and of all uninspected factories and mines.

7. By abolishing the profit system in government work, and substituting either the direct hire of labor or the awarding of contracts to co-operative groups of workers.

8. By establishing minimum wage scales.

9. By abolishing official charity and substituting a non-contributory system of old age pensions, a general system of insurance by the state of all its members against unemployment and invalidism, and a system of compulsory insurance by employers of their workers, without cost to the latter, against industrial diseases, accidents and death.

Is there anything in the above that can be interpreted as opposed to religion or a belief in God?

Socialists do not believe that things **MUST BE** simply because **THEY ARE**. They do **NOT** believe that it is necessary to dwell in hovels here in order to appreciate mansions hereafter. They do **NOT** believe that the Competitive Profit System, that makes men beasts of prey instead of brothers, is a wise, just or needful system. They **DO** believe that this earth of ours has within its inexhaustible treasure house the possibilities of abundant food, comfortable clothing and sanitary shelter for every son and daughter that treads its bosom. And the only reason why all the children of men do not receive abundant food, comfortable clothing and sanitary shelter, is because an **UNSCIENTIFIC** system of production and a **PLANLESS** method of distribution have turned things upside down, and Socialists are come to set them right side up. These are the Voices crying in the Wilderness of Modern Civilization. "Prepare ye the Way. Make the Paths straight." These are the Heralds of the Coming Dawn, when every man, woman and child will have **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY** to develop the individual life to the fullest degree and enjoy happiness and comfort **HERE** and **NOW**.

The time is on the way and fast approaching, when every worker shall receive the full product of his own toil, and no man shall eat his bread in the sweat of another man's brow.

A time when sweatshop and slum, prostitution and child labor, poverty, injustice and war shall be swept from the shores of every con-

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minent into the ocean of oblivion, and every one everywhere shall enjoy the blessings of **INDUSTRIAL FREEDOM** and **ECONOMIC JUSTICE**.

In this Crusade for the Economic Emancipation of the whole human race, the Knights of Columbus and all kindred organizations can lend aid to unmeasured value. "Let them arise and come quickly. For them wait the Captives and Captains of Industry alike; for them wait the heart of God and the destiny of the world."

Additional copies of this pamphlet can be secured by application to the author, 2181 East 55th Street.

Get posted. Whether you oppose or favor Socialism, you must learn its principles to intelligently oppose or advocate.