

**SOCIALISM
A NECESSITY**



AN ADDRESS

BY

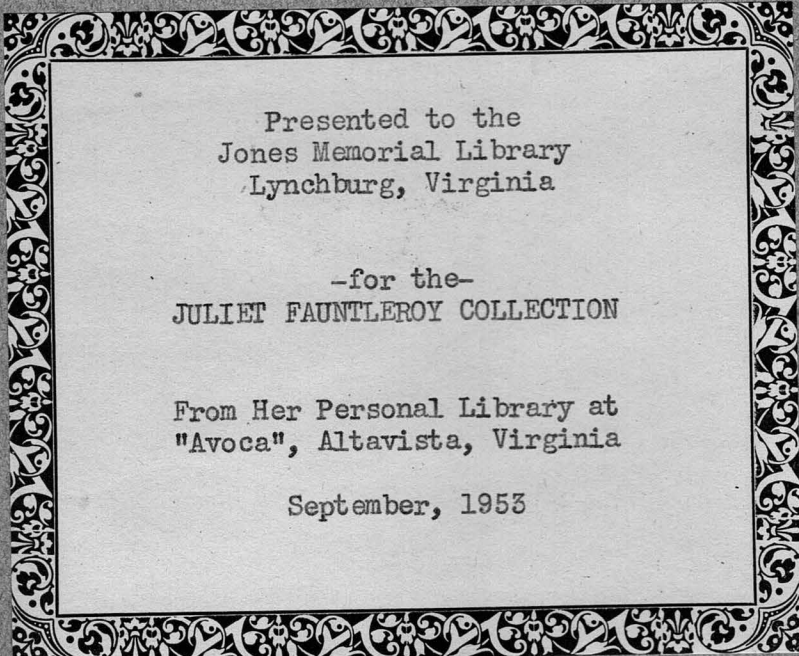
**EX-SENATOR
A. F. THOMAS**



BEFORE THE SPHEX CLUB

LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

DECEMBER 13TH, 1912

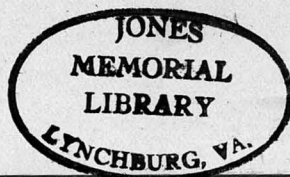


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Left - Miss J. Fauntleroy

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BEFORE THE SPHEX CLUB, LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

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Mr. President and Gentlemen:

Society does not usually exercise much forethought. It adopts the laissez-faire method and moves along lines of least resistance. It does not formulate rules until the necessity for it becomes urgent. It sweeps its vicinage to destroy the epidemic that already exists, but does little to avoid those which may come. Few legislators will entertain a proposed law until compelled by public clamor to do so. They avoid controverted subjects and discourage for an obvious reason any division of opinion. They "lead" the people where the people have shown an unmistakable desire to go. Political education is a slow and costly process, requiring for its advancement the ardent faith and burning zeal of a missionary and in politics, as in religion, it is by no means unusual for the cannibals to eat the missionary. Under this state of things, it is no surprise that the theorist proceeding upon principle should receive short shrift at the hands of an unappreciative populace. Try as one may to point out the dangers ahead, he will have few auditors and still fewer converts.

Prevision demands both arduous thought and a willingness to surrender a present gain in order to possess a future good. Most men do not want to think and the bird in hand is usually worth to them the entire flock in the bush. Knowledge of the past inclines one to the view that men do not walk by light, but choose rather to stumble along more or less unmindful of that which the future may have

in store for them. If difficulties arise, they begin the practice of charlatantry that sometimes comes perilously near destroying the patient. This course of empiricism has been a slow and costly process, but the world seems to be unwilling to adopt any other. Society moves only upon the most urgent necessity. It clings to old forms long after the reason for them has disappeared, and it is only when desperate conditions eventuate that it will consent to break up the crystalization and reform it more in accordance with the needs of the case. It is only when a great necessity arises that the people may be expected to make sweeping and far-reaching changes either in the form or functions of their government. They are more likely to submit to too much oppression than they are to make vital changes on account of transient and unimportant causes.

When the English colonies began protesting against the oppressions of George III. they were not moved by any special desire to be free or to form an American nation. They fawned at the feet of a crazy king for a long time trying to relieve themselves of British taxation, and had their appeals been favorably entertained there is little doubt that the United States today would be a British dependency.

The world may move by one of two methods: It may proceed upon a plan devised in accordance with accepted principles or it may allow matters to drift and predicate its action upon existing conditions. The former method has never been generally adopted and perhaps never will—the latter is the course which human government must take, and the statesman must devote his energies, not so much to measures intended to forestall undesirable results, as to constructive remedies designed to remove unsound conditions by bringing back the social life into accord with sound principles. A priori methods must yield in great measure to a posteriori methods, thus making the efforts to prevent social unsoundness secondary to those designed to cure such conditions after they have actually supervened. This is true because the mass of society must be in accord with the process to make it effective, and it is only through

the punitive effects of evil practices that this mass can be aroused to an appreciation of the importance or even desirability of adopting remedial measures. In other words, experience is a school and its lessons are costly, but there is still a large and influential class which will learn in no other. The hope of democracy lies not in the capacity of the people to adopt a priori methods—to exercise prevision, and thereby to avoid mistakes, but it rests upon society's ability to learn from experience and its willingness to veto undesirable conditions.

In the nature of the case it is impossible for the great body of the people to devote the time and study necessary to a proper understanding of so abstruse and abstract theories of government. This is peculiarly the work of the few. The masses never have done it and there is little reason to think that there will be any marked improvement in the future in this respect. If, then, the hope of popular government rests upon the people's judgment of effects, any restriction upon the expression of the people's veto power must be regarded as just so much check upon their opportunity to get experience and, therefore, an embargo upon social development. If social development is to advance by democratic methods, this veto power must have full and fair expression under forms of law so devised that no question of fairness will arise and no doubt be entertained that the verdict represents the deliberate judgment of the electorate. The secret ballot furnishes the method most likely to give the desired results. The expression of an assembly of persons under the spell perhaps of some masterful orator playing upon a passing prejudice or passion could not be classed as a proper verdict. This would be mobocracy rather than democracy.

While democratic action should be governed by formulated law, the ordinary statute is preferable to constitutional enactment as written constitutions are open to the objection that they undertake to hedge the people about to protect them from themselves. They make more difficult the exercise of the veto power and at the same time make practically impossible timely changes both in substance and in form of government.

Let us now enquire into the nature of government, its purpose, its functions and its facilities. Government is the highest form of co-operation. It is the capstone of collective effort. It has the power to compel each social factor to contribute its part to the maintenance of the organization and in addition it possesses the power to distribute generally all the benefits arising from its action. Government may be regarded as a social instrument designed for social service. It furnishes the machinery for applying the socialistic principle for the common benefit of the inhabitants of the country over which its jurisdiction extends. Its functions are necessarily socialistic as contradistinguished from individualistic, therefore, all who believe in government at all subscribe to the basic principle of socialism. The differences arising between such believers involve no principle, but are simply questions of expediency and judgment as to the extent to which the socialistic principle shall be applied.

The purpose of government is well stated in the preamble to the United States constitution and still better stated in the Virginia Bill of Rights. The first reciting:

"We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America."

The second follows:

"That government is or ought to be instituted for the common benefit, protection and security of the people, nation or community; of all the various modes and forms of government that is best which is capable of producing the greatest degree of happiness and safety and is most effectually secured against the danger of maladministration and whenever any government shall be found inadequate or contrary to these purposes a majority of the community hath an indubitable, inalienable and indefeasible right to reform, alter or abolish it in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public weal."

Government owes its existence to its power to serve.

and, in reason, there should not be any limitation upon the scope of its activities so long as it is the most efficient available agency for the performance of the particular duty. The welfare, happiness and safety of the people are the things to be promoted and once conceding that government is the most efficient power to accomplish these results, the people have a right to delegate the necessary functions to it and to compel it to perform them. The claim, then, that government is restricted to any particular sphere of action or that there is any rigid and arbitrary division between private and public functions rests upon an unwarranted assumption. Once conceding the right of the people to institute government for the common benefit, its particular functions are questions of expediency to be decided by the same majority that called government into existence. In the consideration of these questions, it by no means follows that they shall be considered as a whole. It would no doubt be advisable to consider each separate proposition dissociated from all others and adopt or reject it as the public judgment approved or disapproved.

The assumption of a function by the government in no way increases the dependence of its people. It is civilization that creates this dependence. The further we advance from the simple, primitive methods of the savage, the more complex become the social processes and the greater the inter-dependence of men. If one must seek the blacksmith to shoe his horse, it in no wise affects his degree of dependence, whether he finds the smith in his own shop, in a corporation shop or in an establishment operated by the government. The man not being able to do the work himself, must employ some one else to do it for him, and the only point of vital interest to him is to find the most efficient agency. In primitive times, the functions of government were few — the war-making power being perhaps the most important of them — but as the world has gradually become more civilized and the principle of co-operation has become better understood and its application has become more general in the conduct of the affairs of men, the functions of government have

correspondingly increased. This movement represents the triumph of socialism over anarchy. Since the institution of government, socialism has been steadily pressing anarchy backward and each step toward the broader use of that powerful public servant, the government, which can be justified by the law of efficiency is one more victory won for human progress.

The extension of government functions may take one of two forms — the one having the paramount purpose of benefiting the State as the representative of society, the other having the primary purpose of furnishing better facilities to the individuals composing society. These forms for the purpose of distinction may be called communism and socialism. Communistic functions are those which look primarily to the interest of the State as an organization. The administration of justice, the public defense and the free school system are examples of communism. The government educates the child, primarily, on account of the benefits the State will derive from having an educated citizenship. Upon this theory the State justifies its action in gathering its taxes for this purpose in proportion to accumulation and expending the same in accordance with the need. Socialism under this classification would include those functions which the government assumes because of its ability to furnish more efficient facilities to the individual citizens. The government ownership of gas, water, light, railroads, postoffice and industries may be included in this class. In communistic action the benefit of the State being the paramount purpose, the government should pay for it, but in socialistic action the government should collect from each individual in the proportion that he avails himself of the service. The source of greatest danger in extending the functions of government is in the possible failure to draw the correct distinction between these classes of public service. The extension of the socialistic functions by the communistic method would be entirely subversive of sound economic and governmental principles and could but end in great injury to society. On the other hand, the extension of socialistic functions of government, so long as eco-

conomic efficiency was maintained,so conducted as to furnish better facilities at a lower cost to individuals and each individual compelled to pay cost for the service rendered him would be productive of great good and would make possible a higher civilization than has yet obtained. The first method pauperizes, the second develops the individual.

With the possible exception of the improvement of the school system and the reduction of cost in the administration of justice so as to make the decision depend more upon the merits of the case and less upon the financial strength of the parties to the suit, it is probable that there exists little need at this time for the government to make any radical departures along communistic lines. The urgent need is for the assumption by the government of socialistic functions to provide facilities for freer and fuller development of the principle of co-operation in industry and commerce. Beginning with the railroads, the governments, national, State and municipal, should acquire all private monopolies, natural or acquired. These should be operated in the most efficient manner and the service furnished the public at cost. This cost should include all charges to make the service entirely self-sustaining. It is entirely probable that the effect of this policy would be highly beneficial to the masses in that it would relieve them from an enormous tax that is now levied by these monopolies and the effect upon the smaller businesses of the country would be exceedingly gratifying to them because it would arrest the devouring process which necessarily arises from the aggregation of vast profits in few hands. These accumulations must be invested and the smaller factors must be thus absorbed.

Under the socialistic regime the changes in the economic structure would take place less rapidly than under private initiative because the former lacks the impelling motive and is not under the same urgent necessity to grow larger. The ultimate socialization of the entire means of production and distribution—the ideal of the extreme socialist—will be reached sooner under a policy of allowing private initiative full sway than under the conservative

policy of gradual socialization advocated in this paper. The large and influential class of Tories which arrays itself against any advance in evolutionary socialism is lending its support to revolutionary socialism. It is industriously putting obstructions across the stream of economic and co-operative progress apparently unmindful that the source continues to flow and that sometime the flood will sweep their puny structures before it, engulfing all in a revolution which by the exercise of a modicum of prevision and common sense might have been avoided.

The socialistic principle is only another name for the co-operative principle and it finds its basic support in economic law. Men combine because their joint efforts are more powerful, more productive than individual effort. This combination of forces is a process of conservation of energy. The degree of its development is the index of the stage of civilization. Like other concentrations of power, it is dangerous when misused, but this furnishes no excuse for the restriction of its development for proper purposes. Any effort to prevent the full application of the principle for proper purposes must be regarded as a direct attack upon social progress. The world has proceeded far enough in social evolution to remove all question of individualism as contrasted with collectivism. Individualism has been swept away and co-operation has taken its place as a higher order of human effort succeeding a lower order. The individual remains the most potent factor in either system only that his potentiality is increased manyfold in the co-operative system as compared with the individualistic. Even before the advent of railroads and telegraphs a system of co-operation obtained, only it was divided into small units—sometimes embracing little more than the family. The constant tendency as civilization rose has been to increase the size and decrease the number of co-operative units. These advances from lower to higher stages of evolution were sometimes so gradual that they caused little interruption in the continuity of the process, while in other cases such as a radical invention or the introduction of a greatly improved method of transportation, the effects were cyclonic.

Society may be regarded as a vast machine which at first was very loosely connected—its joints had too much play, its bolts were too loose—its thousand maladjustments caused its journals to knock and jar and its unnecessary friction occasioned an immense loss of power. Beginning in low efficiency, it has gradually improved as each succeeding age has been able to overcome its faults and deficiencies until now in many respects the wheels are humming in approximately a normal manner under a fairly reasonable expenditure of energy. It would present entirely too roseate a view, however, to hold out the idea that these marked advances were uniform or that the social mechanism had anything like approached a state of perfection. Perhaps the evolution has advanced farther in manufacture and distribution than in any other field. Under the continual pressure of desire for more economical production, the standard of efficiency has been greatly elevated. Within the past hundred years the means of transportation have developed more than in all the past. Railroads are penetrating into every nook and corner of the globe. The whole world is rapidly becoming a vast neighborhood with common interests, common knowledge and common aims. The instantaneous communication of thought is becoming practically universal and ideas borne by lightning are daily carried to all the world. That these things must revolutionize society does not admit of doubt, that they will make absolutely necessary marked changes in the form and function of governments is likewise plain.

When man first left the individualistic state in which he dug his own roots with his own fingers and killed, unaided, his cousin-german, the beast, he doubtless engaged in some form of co-operation. Some more expert individual ceased to dig roots and hunt, and devoted his time to fashioning the crude implements of production and warfare for those less expert than himself. Those needing his services divided the results of their labors with him. At this point socialism or co-operation begins. Each succeeding advance was marked by greater specialization and more diversity of employment. Wants multi-

plied and the facilities for satisfying them kept pace. Greater population made necessary the increase of the working forces in the specialized industries and superintendence of the workers became an economic necessity. The larger the industries became the more efficient and less expensive became the superintendence. The increase of productive power at a lessened cost required more and more capital to construct plants, to pay for inventions and to buy machinery. Every time a nut on the social machine was turned to bring it into better adjustment, it eliminated waste and increased the productivity of labor. Such improvements were beneficial to society and have had the effect of greatly raising the standard of living. It is well within bounds to say that reasonable progress has been made in production and while still greater economies will no doubt be effected, the most pressing need of the present is for better systems of distribution and a more equitable plan of division of the benefits arising from social action.

It developed in some prehistoric time when the productive process became complex that one of the laborers assumed the risk of the operation and hired for stipulated sums the remainder of the workers, thus introducing the wage system. Along with this assumption of risk, the employer likewise took upon himself the task of providing the necessary capital.

The wage system seems to be a necessity. It can be modified and improved, but no plan yet proposed would seem to attack this system in its vital point, that is to say, its plan of removing the risk of the operation from the individual laborer and returning to him an ascertained sum for a given amount of labor. Whether co-operative effort takes place under private or public initiative, it is likely that the wage system will continue.

Ethically, the employer in addition to the part he receives for his own labor may reserve to himself a part of the product to protect him against the risk of the business, but this insurance fund should not be more than actual losses, as whatever more than this is taken is an unethical exaction from the workers. In the ideal, all

who contribute brain or brawn are laborers and each laborer has a right to all that he produces. Under the present economic system, the nearer we approach this ideal the weaker the system must become because any increase in the percentage of production allotted to the employe must of necessity come out of the capital fund, hence any movement to lessen profit is correctly assumed to be an attack upon the life and growth of the system itself. The improper adjustment of this insurance fund is responsible for practically all the injustice in the distribution of wealth.

When the employer assumes the task of procuring capital he uses his own savings, he increases his capital from profit on the insurance fund, he combines with other employers under partnership or corporate forms. All of the combinations with other employers are contingent upon the employer's ability to misuse the insurance fund. In other words, no one will put his means in a private business that does not promise a profit. In amassing capital through an excessive insurance charge, there are two classes upon which tribute may be laid, viz., the workers and the consumers of the product. These classes must pay it because under the present system it is necessary to the operation and there is no other source from which it may be drawn. This system of aggregating capital enables the employer to improve economic processes and thereby to give better public service, and the fact that it has resulted in a measure of public benefit is the cause of its retention of life. While fully admitting both the necessity for it in a state of imperfect development and the benefits derived from it in the past, society should nevertheless recognize the inherent evils of the system and strive to remedy them as rapidly as the circumstances will make it practicable to do so.

When the employer makes the insurance charge excessive, the sum above the amount necessary to cover the actual losses of the business is a forced contribution. It is a confiscation of the workers' goods without a proper consideration. As soon as this expropriation takes place, the goods taken become the property of the employer and

a part of his capital when he proceeds at once to demand an additional contribution from the laborer to pay a return on this capital which the employer acquired without giving a full return. In other words, the employer not only confiscates these goods belonging to the laborer, but exacts from him an additional yearly premium for having despoiled him. The greater part of the evils of unjust distribution, the most of the poverty and deprivation in the world today owe their origin, directly or indirectly, to these practices. Here, too, may be found the original source of Special Privilege which like a monster is ever preying upon the vitals of society. Watered stocks, protective tariffs are only methods of swelling the insurance fund out of due proportion. The inflation of securities is the cause of enormous confiscation of the property of the workers.

The railroads of this country present a flagrant instance of this abuse. Their capitalization has more than doubled in the last dozen years, while their mileage has not increased over 25 per cent.

There are some checks upon this power to increase the insurance fund. If the charge is made sufficiently heavy, consumption will decline and the exploiter will realize less from small sales at large profits than he would from large sales at more reasonable profits. Again, excessive profits tend in a low state of economic development to induce others to enter the field in competition for a share of this excessive exaction, but this check will gradually disappear since its action is destructive, finally ending in monopoly by a process of elimination. As the economic evolution proceeds, the units become larger and less numerous and the capital required to compete becomes increasingly greater in amount, thus reducing the numbers of competitors and increasing the opportunity of those competing factors to make terms with each other in order to share in the benefits of monopoly.

This constant tendency to increase the insurance fund betrays the weakness of the system dependent on it and clearly establishes the necessity for outside restraint to keep it in bounds. Full comprehension of these facts must

inevitably lead to the conviction that the practice, while apparently necessary in many cases, is a system to be borne with only until something more equitable can be put in its place. This is the attitude of socialism. It tolerates the profit system as a temporary expedient, but is ready and willing to supplant it with a system of public service whenever the social development will justify.

European governments are much in advance of America in providing remedies against this evil. The public ownership of public utilities and the regulation of prices are the forms this action has taken. America before the Revolutionary War, more especially in Virginia, did more of price regulation than she has done since. Public interference with social duties under private initiative up to the institution of our government consisted largely of arbitrary exactions for the benefit of the crown. The idea of public service had not yet awakened. The public conception of sovereignty in olden times was expressed by the French king when he proclaimed, "L'etat je le suis."

Thomas Jefferson, the greatest of American statesmen, to forestall government oppression endeavored to deny to government as far as possible the power to oppress the individual. No more should a strong centralized power lay its hand upon the helpless citizen, but the government should be weak, its power of political action limited and each part a check upon the others. With this thought in mind, the framers of our government adopted the theory of Montesquieu with its checks and balances. The constitution was amended to provide cities of refuge for the citizen. Little did they suspect that they were instituting government by an oligarchy with the final determination vested in the hands of five judges of the United States Supreme Court. These builders exaggerated the individual out of his true relation to society and magnified his rights at the expense of those of the whole people. Apparently they had no intimation that there would come into existence another individual, artificial it is true, yet into whose nostrils the judiciary would breathe the breath of life and accord to it even greater rights than those enjoyed by mere creatures of flesh and blood. Statutes granting it

charters shall be construed as contracts and regulations of it involving confiscation shall be void. The government in a trial court without granting appeal may take the life of the ordinary citizen, but this citizen by virtue of legal fiction can find ready access to the highest court of the land if its property is in jeopardy. This modern frankenstein growing ever greater upon the abuse of the profit principle presses ever more insistently to acquire the control of every instrumentality of manufacture, transportation and commerce in order to levy its tribute upon these lesser citizens for whom the Jeffersonian school of statesmen undertook to provide adequate protection. Whenever the ordinary citizens undertake to protect themselves by law against this latter day giant, he betakes himself and his brood behind the protecting wall of the constitution built to protect the citizen!

With a constant incentive to promote bad government because it is more profitable for it than good government, the great private corporation through political contributions to its subservient political bosses undertakes to control legislation, to fill the judiciary with its partisans and to shape the course of the executive branches of government. It now seems probable that soon these few artificial persons will dominate the government and the greater part of the people. It is conceded that these creations have been of immense public use, that the progression is much advanced in many respects by their having existed, but this should not blind us to the dangers which threaten nor lessen our efforts to direct the evolution along lines of safety. That there is pressing need for such remedial provision becomes plainer each day. These great private monopolies batted and fattened upon the abuse of the insurance fund necessarily cause to be vested in the hands of a very few industrial barons the control of the credits, the transportation and the commerce of the entire nation. The power is theirs to raise or lower prices at will, to bid the wheels of commerce to revolve or to stand still, to allay public fears or to create a nationwide panic in a day, to permit the workers of the land to earn their bread or to compel them to become idlers and vagabonds, to bring

happiness and contentment into the homes of millions of the women and children of the land or to send gaunt poverty, wretchedness and hunger to these defenseless beings. They have the power to tax the public and gather in forced contributions from every side. They have exercised this power and the sums they have exacted are so enormous as to stagger human conception. To such an extent has the abuse of the insurance fund gone that this highly organized and intensely centralized coterie gathers in annually from two to three billions of profits which in turn must seek investment in productive enterprise. If no check is imposed, it requires no prophet to see that in a quarter of a century the few will own practically the entire means of production, manufacture and distribution in America.

If Jefferson lived today there is little doubt that he would be the same radical he was then and with his powerful grasp of principles and intense desire to promote freedom, he would no doubt be a leader in the movement to restore this country to a condition of equal opportunity by inaugurating measures which would eradicate special privilege whether conferred by discriminating laws or by the operation of an improperly adjusted economic system. By one of those curious turns not infrequent in history, the American people must now appeal to the letter of Hamilton in order to preserve the spirit of Jefferson. The source of danger is no longer governmental, but extra-governmental. It resides in the great concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few, a power so great that it threatens the supremacy of government itself. But two avenues of escape are open, viz., government regulation or government ownership. Both of these propositions rest upon the same ultimate principle, that is the government's supreme power over the property of the individual when devoted to social use. Of the two, government ownership is far the easier of application and more efficient in results. Government regulation applied to the extent necessary to give protection and carried out in good faith would involve a scope of inspection and superintendence that would be fatal to successful operation

of business under private initiative. Were the government seriously to attempt such regulation instead of giving adequate protection, it would much more likely result in wholesale corruption of the government itself, because the business of the country would be practically compelled in order to preserve itself to regulate the government instead of allowing the government to regulate it. In other words, the larger interests would bend every energy to promote bad government because bad government would be more profitable to them than good government. The more reasonable, yea, the more conservative way would seem to be to leave the evolution free to work out the problem, gradually substituting public ownership and operation whenever the co-operation under private initiative had arrived at a state of private monopoly. This would gradually introduce the principle of service in competition with the principle of profit and would give the people the opportunity through experience to arrive at a proper estimate of the comparative merits of the two systems. The effect of this policy would be to discourage the building of private monopoly inasmuch as few would seek to hasten the day when they would be compelled to meet government ownership and operation.

The time honored objection to concentration of power in the hands of the government is no longer tenable since the country is not confronted with a choice between individualism and socialism, nor a selection between decentralization and centralization. Socialism is already an accomplished fact, and the only choice left the people is between public socialism with its power and incentive to serve the public, and private socialism with its ownership by the few and its inferior power to render service and its constant incentive to corrupt the government and to fleece the people. Centralization is a present reality and the selection left is between public centralization divorced from the corrupting elements inherent in great private aggregations of wealth and private centralization with its power of control that will be exerted to maintain, if not to increase the tribute laid upon a defenseless public.

Public socialism does not contemplate a "dividing up



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process" in which the wealth of the country will be pro-rated. Its highest aim is to inaugurate a system of division of the fruits of labor more in accord with justice than that which now obtains. It will not give to anyone because he is poor, but will undertake to prevent one from engaging in robbery even if he is rich. Socialism's ideal is to return to every man the full measure of that which he produces. Socialism, as already pointed out, is not a new thing but is as old as human civilization. It asserts no new principle, but resolutely demands the application of the very old one of public service to the new problems now confronting us. Already this application is being made in every civilized country. Municipal ownership is an established condition in most advanced countries, the government ownership of railroads is rapidly spreading. More than half of all the mileage of the world excluding that of the United States is now government owned. Nearly a third of the mileage of the entire world including ours is so owned. Government insurance is being adopted. The operation of coffee and tobacco monopolies and coal mines are likewise functions already assumed by some of the first class powers.

Steadily and irresistibly goes forward the extension of the functions of government and nowhere is seen a movement of importance designed to surrender such functions when once assumed. The undesirable conditions which the Tories prophesy have not developed where these things have been subjected to actual test. On the contrary the cleanest, most efficient governments of the world are to be found where the greatest amount of actual socialism is practiced. In our own country the undesirable political conditions arise not from our socialistic public practices, but generally from the corrupting influence of the profit mongers who exercise franchises and functions which should be operated by the public.

Socialism does not propose to bring all men down to the same plane further than to offer each an equal opportunity. Rewarding each according to justice, it says to the strong exert your powers and enjoy the possession of the fruits of your labor, but you shall not use your superior

strength to despoil your weaker neighbor of that which he has produced. When social justice shall exist, it will be found that the need of the world was not charity but justice and that economic and social conditions will improve to such an extent that the unfortunates now known as the dependent classes in large measure will have been superseded by those who are self-sustaining. Socialism does not look with favor upon that system of so-called rewards which robs the many to induce the few to make extra exertions, for the reason that it is unjust and for the further reason that it does not make for real progress since that which is unjustly bestowed upon the few as a stimulus under the law of compensation has a repressive influence upon the many from whom it is taken. Socialism under no condition holds out to the lazy and shiftless the hope that they may become charges upon society. On the other hand, it promises only a fair and even opportunity with neither handicaps nor special rewards to any. It undertakes to provide a system under which each will receive that which in justice belongs to him and one that will compel him who would enjoy the fruits of labor first to do the labor himself.

The great dread of socialism felt by some comes not so much from a fear that the effects of its operation will be bad for the public as it does from a belief that the institution of government operation will restrict the opportunities of the exploiting class. Those who gather where they have not sown have never as a rule looked with favor upon a proposition to restrict their opportunities and diminish their spoliations. Socialism is an economic philosophy, and as our problems are now more economic than political, it follows that this question must become from now on the paramount issue between the political parties.

The Democratic and Republican parties have lived out their allotted time and change or death now confronts them. The issues which divided them in the past have largely settled themselves. Their present differences are not sufficiently pronounced to justify separate existence. Method and form of government are no longer of sufficient importance to engage public attention to the exclusion of

other things. Looming large before the public are these issues: What shall be done to preserve the advantages of large operation and at the same time provide for a more equitable distribution of the benefits? What shall be done to stop the industrial slavery that is fast gathering our workers, our farmers and our small tradesmen into the terrible tentacles of the money octopus which threatens to dominate our institutions and make slaves of our people? In the language of the late Mr. Cleveland, it is not a theory, but a condition, that confronts us. The issue can neither be ignored nor dodged. It must be met and not only met but settled.

The Republican party would leave the powerful few untrammelled to continue the absorption of the wealth of the country and achieve the complete ownership of the instrumentalities of production and distribution, thus hastening the day when revolution would become a necessity. The Progressive party would inaugurate a system of regulation more extensive than the world has ever known which would necessarily lead to public corruption, followed most likely by despotic government. The Democratic party clinging to the letter of Jefferson long after the spirit has departed would vainly try to carry the world back to the economic and industrial conditions which obtained a century ago. It would make big things impossible and allow little things to take care of themselves. The objections to its program are that it is impracticable, reactionary and would stop human progress. Society would not agree to forego the advantages of higher civilization simply to test a party theory. The ultimate practical result of the theories of these three parties would be the same. When their empirical nostrums had been tried, the same select few who now rule would be found in quiet possession of the machinery of production and distribution indulging in the pleasant pastime of taking from the toilers of the land an undue share of the fruits of labor.

The socialist party standing firmly against exploitation in all forms and ready whenever it may be practicable to destroy special privilege proposes to preserve all the advantages that superior knowledge and developed science

have brought mankind. It purposes not only to preserve large operation with its economic savings, but to still further increase its magnitude to the extent that economic law may justify. It would make of the government a public servant to do for the whole people the things which it could do better than other agencies, just as we employed it to dig the Panama canal. It would use this agency to bring the cost of production to the lowest possible point consistent with justice to the workers and to eliminate entirely from distribution the element of profit. It proposes to substitute the principle of service for the principle of profit and believe that it is entirely unnecessary to allow a few plutocrats to prey upon and enslave the masses. It stands both as a conservative and progressive force in social matters. It is conservative in that it stands unequivocally in favor of law and order. It is pledged to oppose any and all attempts of either an oligarchy or a mob to impose its will upon the people. It is progressive in that it would provide the methods by which the will of the people may find full and fair expression. It would provide machinery owned by all the people for production and distribution so that co-operation with its manifold benefits may proceed to its highest forms without endangering the liberties or invading the rights of anyone. It stands for peaceful evolution and against destructive revolution. Its voice is for peace and not for war. Its claim for support rests upon its higher ethical principles and its constructive program.

The civilized world stands at the parting of the ways. The alternatives presented are Evolution or Devolution. Is it possible that man, like Sisyphus, through all the ages of the past has been laboriously rolling the stone upward only to see it slip now from his grasp and rush madly downward into the depths whence it came? Socialism denies it and hopefully points the way to still higher ground, to still grander achievement, to that ideal commonwealth in which all men, under just laws and an equitable economic system may have equal opportunity to develop the powers with which a beneficent God has endowed them.

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Thomas



