CHAPTER V.


While the Socialists are bent on a revolution in the economic condition of the working class, or, as they choose to term it, the proletariat, they have conclusively shown that they do not desire to further that movement by pacific means. Imbued with the doctrines of violence and intent on the complete destruction of government, they do not seek their end by orderly, legitimate methods. This fact has been most thoroughly established by the extracts from their public declarations which I have already given.

But if any doubts still exist with reference thereto, they are completely dissipated by an examination into the attitude assumed by the Socialists toward the labor problem as it exists at the present day. It is not my purpose to enter into a detailed review of the whole field. I will simply call attention to one fact, and in that fact one sweeps the labor horizon, viewed from the Socialistic standpoint, as the astronomer sweeps the heavens with his telescope, striking the most prominent objects within the range of observation. This one fact is the position of the Socialists toward the eight-hour movement.

It is generally known that many economists and agitators, with neither affiliations nor sympathy for Socialism, have been contending for years that with the rapid increase in labor-saving machinery and the consequent displacement of labor, reduction in the hours of service has become an absolute necessity. The points made in support of this position are numerous, and as the most salient ones appear in a memorial on the part of a National Labor Convention to the Committee on Depression in Labor and Business of the Forty-sixth Congress, drafted November 10, 1879, I may briefly quote a few. The memorial asked a reduction:

1. In the name of political economy. “All political economists are agreed,” they said, “that the standard of wages is determined by the cost of subsistence rather than by the number of hours employed. Wages are recognized as resulting from the necessary cost of living in any given community. The cost of subsistence for an average family determines the rate, and it is for this reason that single men can save more if they will.”

2. In the interest of civilization. “The battle for a reduction of the
hours of labor is a struggle for a wider civilization." With less hours, more leisure is afforded for mental and social improvement. In proof the memorialists appealed to the past and to the fact that one day of rest in seven has raised the social condition of the people. Besides, they urged, the "history of the short-hour movement in England proved conclusively that every reduction of time in the United Kingdom had invariably been followed by an increase of wages," and the consequent improvement of workingmen.

3. The changed relations between production and consumption demand remedial legislation. A reduction of hours would give more men employment. Under existing conditions, capital and production have increased while the number of persons employed has fallen off.

These are doctrines one would think the Socialist, pretending to have the interests of labor at heart, would unquestionably and heartily indorse. Far from it. True to his nature as a social disturber, disorganizer and malcontent, he sees in it a possible solution of many labor troubles and the approach to a rearrangement of existing conditions on a basis different from his own theories. When this question arose in Chicago in the winter of 1885–86, the Alarm entered its most emphatic protest. In its issue of December 14, 1885, it had this to say, under the heading, "No Compromise":

We of the Internationale are frequently asked why we do not give our active support to the proposed eight-hour movement. Let us take what we can get, say our eight-hour friends, else by asking too much we may get nothing.

We answer: Because we will not compromise. Either our position that capitalists have no right to the exclusive ownership of the means of life is a true one, or it is not. If we are correct, then to concede the point that capitalists have the right to eight hours of our labor, is more than a compromise; it is a virtual concession that the wage system is right. If capitalists have the right to own labor or to control the results of labor, then clearly we have no business dictating the terms upon which we may be employed. We cannot say to our employers, "Yes, we acknowledge your right to employ us; we are satisfied that the wage system is all right, but we, your slaves, propose to dictate the terms upon which we will work." How inconsistent! And yet that is exactly the position of our eight-hour friends. They presume to dictate to capital, while they maintain the justness of the capitalist system; they would regulate wages while defending the claims of the capitalists to the absolute control of industry.

These sentiments were frequently reiterated by A. R. Parsons, who was the editor of the Alarm; and in August Spies he found an energetic ally. Among other things Spies said concerning the movement:

We do not antagonize the eight-hour movement. Viewing it from the standpoint that it is a social struggle, we simply predict that it is a lost battle, and we will prove that, even though the eight-hour system should be established at this late day, the wage-workers would gain nothing. They would still remain the slaves of their masters.

Suppose the hours of labor should be shortened to eight, our productive capacity would thereby not be diminished. The shortening of the hours of labor in England was immediately followed by a general increase of labor-saving machines, with a subsequent discharge of a proportionate number of employees. The reverse of what had been sought took place. The exploitation of those at work was intensified. They now performed more labor, and produced more than before.
The movement, however, took a firm hold of the laboring classes. They saw in it a chance to secure more leisure, and, inspired by their anti-Socialistic leaders, did all in their power to further it. There were then in Chicago a great many unemployed, and under the plea that a reduction in the hours of toil would not only give more time for self-improvement, but necessitate the employment of many of the idle throng, the leaders advocated its speedy introduction. At this time the general sentiment prevailed that it was simply a movement for a reduction in working-time, the question of wages not being involved. Some few irresponsible talkers of the Socialistic stamp, it is true, held out that it was to be a contention for wages as well, but the most influential and conservative representatives of labor insisted that they only wanted eight hours' work for eight-hours' pay. Grand Master Workman Powderly held to the latter view and repeatedly urged the members of the Knights of Labor not to go beyond that demand. He even intimated a doubt if it were the part of wisdom and policy to undertake at the time a strike of the kind, in view of the complications then growing out of the Missouri Pacific Railway—known as the Gould system—"tie-up." Traffic and industry had been seriously affected throughout the West by Martin Irons' stubbornness, and it is evident that Powderly had his misgivings about the outcome of an eight-hour strike. However, the leaders continued their agitation, and it was decided that the resolution adopted in 1884 by a number of trades organizations in national session for an eight-hour strike on May 1, 1886, should be carried out in Chicago, as in other large manufacturing and trade centers. Had this simple proposition not been "loaded," the result of the movement might have been different, but, as the time drew near, it became quite apparent that, despite Powderly's warnings, the question of wages was to cut a leading figure. It was developed that the demand for a reduction of hours was to be accompanied with a demand for the same wages as under the old ten-hour system. This was the rock upon which they subsequently foundered. Had they been content to accept decreased wages and relied upon increased efficiency and skill and the logic of events to secure increased pay in the future, they might have scored many victories, if not a complete success.

But they were alike unmindful of Powderly's advice and the teachings of history. They seemingly forgot that the employers would naturally resist any such sweeping concession, and that, as in other instances, the unemployed would at once be installed, whenever possible, in their places, and that in industries where there did not exist an overproduction, the capacity of machines would be more heavily taxed and new machines would be introduced to do work hitherto done by hand. A London publication has shown how, in recent years, in the extremity of bitter strikes, manufacturers have increased their labor-saving machinery to offset the absence of their workmen and how invention in the line of new machines has been
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greatly stimulated by a stubborn conflict between employer and employé. Hon. David A. Wells has also pointed out a similar result in this country. Identically the same thing happened in several establishments in Chicago. The unemployed and new machines were called into requisition whenever possible.

But labor-saving machinery need not necessarily be regarded as an enemy of labor. That doctrine, which had its origin at the time when a riot in Spain followed the introduction of a machine to make woolens, and which continued until the invention of the sewing-machine, has in this day come to be regarded by all enlightened economists as a nightmare of the musty past. The fact is labor has been aided and benefited by machinery.

Prof. Edison, the great inventor, is authority for the statement that the increase in machinery and inventions during the last fifty years has doubled the wages of workingmen and reduced the cost of the necessaries of life 50 per cent. "For the first time in the world's history," he says, "a skilled mechanic can buy a barrel of flour with a single day's work." Hon. David A. Wells, in an article in the Popular Science Monthly for October, 1887, treating of the depression of prices since 1873, also demonstrates the fact that the reductions, which he states to be 30 per cent., during the time under his review, are due to inventions. Edison goes still further in his statement with reference to the enhancement of wages. He predicts, rather too glowingly perhaps, that in another generation even "the unskilled laborer, if sober and industrious, will have a house of his own, a library, a piano and a horse and carriage," with all the comforts that these imply.

Anarchist Spies evidently took no stock in such a condition as the result of new and improved mechanical appliances, for in his early opposition to the inauguration of the eight-hour movement he declared that "for a man who desires to remain a wage slave, the introduction of every new improvement and machine is a threatening competitor."

I have thus pointed to some facts bearing on strikes and wages because it has since transpired that the Anarchists or Socialists, intent on precipitating the "social revolution," were the principal instigators of the demand for ten hours' pay for eight hours' work, thereby hoping to irritate the employers to determined resistance and the workingmen of non-Socialistic ideas to the point of violence. Past experience was cast aside under their clandestine guidance. While the movement was in its infancy the Socialists, as such, held aloof, but, the moment they saw that it was gaining strength and was likely to involve all the wage-workers in the city, and that eight hours on a basis of reduced pay might be secured, they perceived their opportunity to complicate matters by the introduction of a demand for the old wages with reduced time. This at once threw down the gauntlet. While before they had opposed the movement, they now became active agitators in its behalf and appeared more solicitous about its certain inaug-
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vation than they were about its successful ending. Their organs bristled with incendiary language. Their speakers could hardly find words strong enough to fire their auditors in the demand for eight hours. They even got up a procession under the auspices of the Central Labor Union, and, on Sunday, April 25, 1886, paraded the streets with red flags and red badges.

Among some of the mottoes displayed were: “The Social Revolution,” “Workingmen, Arm Yourselves,” “Down with Throne, Altar and Money-bags,” and “Might makes Right, and You are the Strongest.”

The procession massed on the Lake Front. There the leading speakers were loud in encouraging the strike for eight hours. Parsons maintained that “if the demands of workingmen were met by a universal lock-out, the signal would be taken as one of ‘war, and war to the knife.’” Spies declared that “the eight-hour day had been argued for twenty years. We at last can hope to realize it.” Schwab and Fielden were alike emphatic.

The Arbeiter-Zeitung likewise heartily endorsed the movement. In its issue of April 26, 1886, appeared an editorial of which the following is the concluding paragraph:

What a modest demand, the introduction of the eight-hour day! And yet a corps of madmen could not demean themselves worse than the capitalistic extortioners. They continually threaten with their disciplined police and their strong militia,—and these are not empty threats. This is proved by the history of the last few years. It is a nice thing, this patience, and the laborer, alas! has too much of this article; but one must not indulge in a too frivolous play with it. If you go farther, his patience will cease; then it will be no longer a question of the eight-hour day, but a question of emancipation from wage slavery.

In the same paper two days later the editor said:

What will the first of May bring? The workingmen bold and determined. The decisive day has arrived. The workingman, inspired by the justice of his cause, demands an alleviation of his lot, a lessening of his burden. The answer, as always, is: “Insolent rabble! Do you mean to dictate to us? That you will do to your sorrow. Hunger will soon rid you of your desire for any notions of liberty. Police, executioners and militia will give their aid.”

Men of labor, so long as you acknowledge the gracious kicks of your oppressors with words of gratitude, so long you are faithful dogs. Have your skulls been penetrated by a ray of light, or does hunger drive you to shake off your servile nature, that you offend your extortioners? They are enraged, and will attempt, through hired murderers, to do away with you like mad dogs.

When the eventful day—May 1—arrived, the Arbeiter-Zeitung became more menacing than ever, and the following appeared:

Bravely forward! The conflict has begun. An army of wage-laborers are idle. Capitalism conceals its tiger claws behind the ramparts of order. Workmen, let your watchword be: No compromise! Cowards to the rear! Men to the front!

The die is cast. The first of May has come. For twenty years the working people have been begging extortioners to introduce the eight-hour system, but have been put off with promises. Two years ago they resolved that the eight-hour system should be introduced in the United States on the first day of May, 1886. The reasonableness of this demand was conceded on all hands. Everybody, apparently, was in favor of shortening the hours; but, as the time approached, a change became apparent. That which was in theory modest and
Wir betrauern den Tod eines Arbeisters mehr als den Tod eines Gen. Grant.

1. Government is Slaves, freedom for themselves.
2. God grant free men to be poor.
3. Day to day government is conspiracy against the people.
4. "We mourn the death of a workingman more than the death of a Gen. Grant."
5. "Down with throne, altar, and money-bags."
6. "Workingmen, arm yourselves."
7. "Every Government is a conspiracy against the People."
8. "Not to be a Slave is to dare and do!"

BANNERS OF THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION—IV. FROM PHOTOGRAPHS.
reasonably, became insolent and unreasonable. It became apparent at last that the eight-hour hymn had only been struck up to keep the labor dunces from Socialism.

That the laborers might energetically insist upon the eight-hour movement, never occurred to the employer. And it is proposed again to put them off with promises. We are not afraid of the masses of laborers, but of their pretended leaders. Workmen insist upon the eight-hour movement. "To all appearances it will not pass off smoothly." The extortioners are determined to bring their laborers back to servitude by starvation. It is a question whether the workmen will submit, or will impart to their would-be murderers an appreciation of modern views. We hope the latter.

In the same issue of the Arbeiter-Zeitung also appeared the following, in a conspicuous place:

It is said that on the person of one of the arrested comrades in New York a list of membership has been found, and that all the comrades compromised have been arrested. Therefore, away with all rolls of membership, and minutes-books, where such are kept. Clean your guns, complete your ammunition. The hired murderers of the capitalists, the police and militia, are ready to murder. No workingman should leave his house in these days with empty pockets.

The consummate inconsistency of the Socialists is thus no better illustrated in what has already been shown than in their record in Chicago. They have always been eager to jump on top of the band wagon, to paraphrase a famous expression of Emery A. Storrs, when they thought that it gave them a chance to join in the lead of the procession; and, the moment they had a voice in directing the music, they led it beyond the mere sentiments of a Marseillaise. Take each formidable strike in the city, and invariably they have instigated the rabble to deeds of disorder and violence. What care they for labor reforms accomplished through peaceable agitation? It is only when a pretext is presented for widening the breach between capital and labor, and hastening the time for revolution, that the Socialists join in any movement looking to the real benefit of labor. It is true, they have figured in labor reforms, such as the agitation for national and State bureaus of labor statistics, the abolition of convict labor in competition with outside industries, the prevention of child labor in factories and work-shops, the sanitary inspection of tenement-houses and factories; but all these have been merely side issues to their one and controlling purpose—Revolution. For appearance's sake they have boasted of their achievements in the lines indicated, but it is a fact of history that, without the efforts of non-Socialistic labor, none of the reforms so far accomplished would ever have been secured. The fact is that Socialists and Anarchists are radically opposed to the whole wage system and only join in the demands of law-observing and peace-loving labor as a means to one end—opportunity for disturbance. For this purpose alone they have become members of the Knights of Labor, and, once in, they have proved an element of disorder and contention. So pronounced had they become in fomenting trouble during the eight-hour agitation that Mr. Powderly finally found it necessary to issue a secret circular to the order in the spring of 1886. In that circular, among other things, he said:
Men who own capital are not our enemies. If that theory held good, the workman of to-
day would be the enemy of his fellow-toiler on the morrow, for, after all, it is how to acquire
capital and how to use it properly that we are endeavoring to learn. No! The man of capital
is not necessarily the enemy of the laborer; on the contrary, they must be brought closer
together. I am well aware that some extremists will say I am advocating a weak plan and

![Interior View of New's Hall. — From a Photograph.]

will say that bloodshed and destruction of property alone will solve the problem. If a man
speaks such sentiments in an assembly read for him the charge which the Master Workman
repeats to the newly initiated who join our "army of peace." If he repeats such nonsense
put him out.

Wise words and well spoken.