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What Socialist America Will Look Like

**James P. Cannon
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A Speak Out Now Pamphlet



James P. Cannon
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**The following brief biography of James P. Cannon was written by
David Holmes of Resistance Books**

James Patrick Cannon was born in February 1890 in Rosedale, Kansas (today a part of Kansas City). His socialism came from his father, an Irish republican and Populist who had become a socialist in 1897.

Cannon joined the Socialist Party in 1908; he left it in 1911 to join the more militant Industrial Workers of the World. In 1912-14 he was a travelling organizer and agitator for the IWW in the Midwest and during the war he was active in its Kansas City branch.

Following the 1917 Russian Revolution, Cannon rejoined the SP to link up with its developing pro-Bolshevik left wing. In June, 1919 he was Kansas City delegate to a national SP left-wing caucus in New York. At the SP's August 1919 convention in Chicago, the left-wing split. Two communist parties were formed; Cannon and the Kansas City left wing adhered to John Reed's Communist Labor Party. Cannon was elected CLP secretary for Missouri and organizer for Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska.

In December 1921, the two communist parties fused to form the Workers Party of America. Cannon was its first national chairman (until 1923) and delivered the keynote address at the convention. He was a member of the Central Executive Committee from 1920 to 1928 and of the Executive Council from 1922 to 1928. He was a prominent party spokesperson through the 1920s.

In July 1925 Cannon played the key role in founding the International Labor Defense, a united-front organization dedicated to defending all class-war prisoners. Cannon was ILD secretary from its inception until his expulsion in 1928.

In June 1922, Cannon was the US delegate to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow. He spent seven months there and was a delegate to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. He made four further trips to the Soviet Union, representing the US party at Comintern meetings. On his last trip he was a delegate to the Comintern's Sixth World Congress, July-August 1928.

At this congress, he accidentally obtained a copy of Trotsky's criticism of the draft program of the Comintern and was won to the perspectives of the Left Opposition. Returning to the US, in October 1928 he was expelled from the CP for "Trotskyism," along with Max Shachtman and Martin Abern.

Cannon gathered more supporters and established the Communist League of America, as the US organization of the International Left Opposition. In November 1928, the first issue of the Militant came out. The CLA held its first convention in Chicago in May 1929.

In 1934 the CLA gained national prominence through its leadership role in the Minneapolis Teamsters strikes. In December, the CLA fused with A.J. Muste's American Workers Party to form the Workers Party of the United States.

In the latter part of 1934 Cannon travelled to France for a leadership meeting of the International Communist League (the successor body to the International Left Opposition) and to help

resolve the severe internal problems of the French Trotskyists. He also met Trotsky at his temporary home in the French Alps.

In mid-1936 the WPUS entered the Socialist Party as a public faction in order to meet up with the left wing developing there. Forced out in the latter part of 1937, the Trotskyists took the bulk of the SP youth and radical workers with them. At a conference in Chicago, the Socialist Workers Party was founded on New Year's Day 1938.

In the summer of 1938, Cannon travelled to England to try to promote the unity of the various Trotskyist groups there. Then he went to France to participate in the founding conference of the Fourth International in Paris in September. His work there was highly appreciated by Trotsky.

In 1939-40 a struggle took place in the SWP over the attitude to be taken toward the Soviet Union in the coming war. With Trotsky, Cannon played the main role in arguing that the USSR should be defended against imperialism, despite Stalin. Max Shachtman, James Burnham and Martin Abern split in April 1940, taking 40% of the organization with them to form the Workers Party.

In July 1941, Cannon and a number of other SWP and Teamster leaders in Minneapolis were indicted for conspiring to overthrow the US government. Eventually Cannon and 17 other party leaders were sentenced to prison terms of 12-16 months. Cannon was in jail from the end of 1943 until January 1945.

He served as the SWP's national secretary until 1953 when Farrell Dobbs took over. From then until his death he was the national chairman of the party.

In 1952-53 Cannon led the fight to defend the party's revolutionary perspectives against the minority led by Bert Cochran (see the section Defending the Revolutionary Party in this volume).

In 1952 Cannon and his companion, Rose Karsner, moved to Los Angeles. Cannon died there in August 1974.

The following was the final lecture in a six-part series by James Cannon on "America's Road to Socialism." It was given at forum put on by the Socialist Worker's Party in Los Angeles on January 23, 1953 and first published in The Militant on July 27 of the same year. The text is reprinted from [marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org) (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/cannon/works/1953/socialistamer.htm>)

What Socialist America Will Look Like

By James P. Cannon

We Marxists conceive of socialism, not as an arbitrary scheme of society to be constructed from a preconceived plan, but as the next stage of social evolution. The preceding lectures dealt with the struggle for socialism, which develops in succeeding stages foreseen, understood, and consciously organized by the revolutionary party on the basis of a program. The subject of this lecture – “What Socialist America Will Look Like” – carries us beyond our formal program.

Our discussion tonight deals with the socialist society itself, which will grow out of the new conditions when the class struggle will have been carried to its conclusion – that is, to the abolition of classes and consequently of all class struggles. Our preview of the socialist society, therefore, is not a program for struggle, but a forecast of the lines of future development already indicated in the present.

The architects and builders of the socialist society of the future will be the socialist generations themselves. The great Marxists were quite sure of this and refrained from offering these future generations any instructions or blueprints. Their writings, however, do contain some marvelous flashes of insight which light up the whole magnificent perspective. The insights of these men of transcendent genius will be the guiding line of my exposition tonight.

Auguste Blanqui, the great French revolutionist, said: “Tomorrow does not belong to us.” We ought to admit that, and recognize at the same time that it is better so. The people in the future society will be wiser than we are. We must assume that they will be superior to us, in every way, and that they will know what to do far better than we can

tell them. We can only anticipate and point out the general direction of development, and we should not try to do more. But that much we are duty bound to do; for the prospect of socialism – what the future socialist society will look like – is a question of fascinating interest and has a great importance in modern propaganda.

The new generation of youth who will come to our movement and dedicate their lives to it will not be willing to squander their young courage and idealism on little things and little aims. They will be governed by nothing less than the inspiration of a great ideal, the vision of a new world. We are quite justified, therefore, in tracing some of the broad outlines of probable future development; all the more so since the general direction, if not the details, can already be foreseen.

In attempting an approximate estimate of what life will be like under socialism, we run up against the inadequacy of present-day society as a measuring rod or basis of comparison with the future. One must project himself into a different world, where the main incentives and compulsions of present-day society will no longer be operative; where in time they will be completely forgotten, and have merely a puzzling interest to students of an outlived age.

Material premise of socialism

Socialism will undoubtedly bring about a revolutionary transformation of human activity and association in all fields previously conditioned by the division of society into classes – in work, in education, in sports and amusements, in manners and morals, and in incentives and rewards.

But all these changes, which can be anticipated and predicted, will begin with and proceed from the revolutionary transformation of the system of production and the consequent augmentation and multiplication of the productivity of labor. This is the necessary material premise for a society of shared abundance. The revolutionary reorganization of the labor process – of the manner of working and of regulating, measuring, and compensating the labor time of the

individual – will take place first and should be considered first, because it will clear the way for all the other changes.

Here at the start we lack an adequate standard of comparison. The necessary amount of productive labor time which will be required of each individual in the new society cannot be calculated on the basis of the present stage of industrial development. The advances in science and technology which can be anticipated, plus the elimination of waste caused by competition, parasitism, etc., will render any such calculation obsolete. Our thought about the future must be fitted into the frame of the future.

Even at the present stage of economic development, if everybody worked and there was no waste, a universal four-hour day would undoubtedly be enough to provide abundance for all in the advanced countries. And once the whole thought and energy of society is concentrated on the problem of increasing productivity, it is easily conceivable that a new scientific-technological-industrial revolution would soon render a compulsory productive working day of four hours, throughout the normal lifetime of an individual, so absurdly unnecessary that it would be recognized as an impossibility.

All concepts of the amount of necessary labor required from each individual, based on present conditions and practices, must be abandoned in any serious attempt to approach a realistic estimate of future prospects and possibilities in this basic field. The labor necessary to produce food, clothing, shelter, and all the conveniences and refinements of material life in the new society will be operative, social labor – with an ever-increasing emphasis on labor-saving and automatic, labor-eliminating machinery, inventions and scientific discoveries, designed to increase the rate of productivity.

Withering away of labor and money

This labor will be highly organized and therefore disciplined in the interests of efficiency in production. There can be no anarchy in the cooperative labor process; but only freedom from labor, to an ever-

increasing extent as science and technology advance productivity and automatically reduce the amount of labor time required from the individual.

The progressive reduction of this labor time required of each individual will, in my opinion, soon render it impractical to compute this labor time on a daily, weekly, or even yearly basis. It is reasonable to assume – this is my opinion, but only my opinion, and not a program – that the amount of labor time required of the individual by society during his whole life expectancy, will be approximately computed, and that he will be allowed to elect when to make this contribution. I incline strongly to the idea that the great majority will elect to get their required labor time over with in their early youth, working a full day for a year or two. Thereafter, they would be free for the rest of their lives to devote themselves, with freedom in their labor, to any scientific pursuit, to any creative work or play or study which might interest them. The necessary productive labor they have contributed in a few years of their youth will pay for their entire lifetime maintenance, on the same principle that the workers today pay for their own paltry “social security” in advance.

On the road to that, or some similar arrangement, beginning already in the transition period which we discussed last week, there will be an evolutionary change of labor regulations, calculations, and payments. Emerging from capitalism, the transitional society, will carry over some capitalist methods of accounting, incentives, and rewards. People first will work for wages. They will be paid in money, backed by the gold in Fort Knox, for the amount of work performed. But after a certain period, where there is abundance and even superabundance, the absurdity of strict wage regulation will become apparent. Then the gold will be taken out of Fort Knox and put to some more useful purpose, if such can be found.

When people will have no further use for money, they will wonder what to do with all this gold, which has cost so much human labor and agony. Lenin had a theory that under socialism gold could be used, maybe, to make doorknobs for public lavatories, and things like that.

But no Marxist authority would admit that in the socialist future men will dig in the earth for such a useless metal.

The accounting arrangements automatically registered by money wages based on gold will at a certain stage be replaced by labor certificates or coupons, like tickets to the theatre. But even that, eventually, will pass away. Even that kind of accounting, which would take up useless labor and be absolutely purposeless, will be eliminated. There will be no money, and there will not even be any bookkeeping transactions or coupons to regulate how much one works and how much he gets. When labor has ceased to be a mere means of life and becomes life's prime necessity, people will work without any compulsion and take what they need. So said Marx.

Does that sound "visionary"? Here again, one must make an effort to lift himself out of the framework of the present society, and not consider this conception absurd or "impractical". The contrary would be absurd. For in the socialist society, when there is plenty and abundance for all, what will be the point in keeping account of each one's share, any more than in the distribution of food at a well-supplied family table? You don't keep books as to who eats how many pancakes for breakfast or how many pieces of bread for dinner. Nobody grabs when the table is laden. If you have a guest, you don't seize the first piece of meat for yourself, you pass the plate and ask him to help himself first.

When you visualize society as a "groaning board" on which there is plenty for all, what purpose would be served in keeping accounts of what each one gets to eat and to wear? There would be no need for compulsion or forcible allotment of material means. "Wages" will become a term of obsolete significance, which only students of ancient history will know about. "Speaking frankly" – said Trotsky – "I think it would be pretty dull-witted to consider such a really modest perspective 'utopian'."

The ethic of capitalism and its normal procedure, of course, are quite different. But don't ever, dear comrades, make the mistake of thinking that anything contrary to its rules and its ethics is utopian, or

visionary, or absurd. No, what's absurd is to think that this madhouse is permanent and for all time. The ethic of capitalism is: "From each whatever you can get out of him – to each whatever he can grab." The socialist society of universal abundance will be regulated by a different standard. It will "inscribe on its banners" – said Marx – "From each according to his ability – to each according to his needs." I speak now of the higher phase of socialist society, which some Marxist authorities prefer to call communism.

Removal of insecurity

In the present society people are haunted by insecurity. Their mental health is undermined by fear for their future and the future of their children. They are never free from fear that if something happens, if they have a sickness or an accident for which they are not responsible, the punishment will be visited upon their children; that their children will be deprived of an education and proper food and clothing.

Under such conditions this "human nature", which we hear so much about, is like a plant trying to flower in a dark cellar; it really doesn't get much chance to show its true nature, its boundless potentialities. In the socialist society of shared abundance, this nightmare will be lifted from the minds of the people. They will be secure and free from fear; and this will work a revolution in their attitude toward life and their enjoyment of it. Human nature will get a chance to show what it is really made of.

The present division of society into classes, under which the few have all the privileges and the many are condemned to poverty and insecurity, carries with it a number of artificial and unnatural divisions which deform the individual and prevent the all-around development of his personality and his harmonious association with his kind. There is the division between men's work and women's work, to say nothing of men's rights and women's rights. There is the division of race prejudice between the Negroes and the whites, which is cruelly unjust to the former and degrading to the latter. There is the division between

manual and intellectual labor, which produces half-men on each side. There is the division between the city and the country, which is harmful to the inhabitants of both.

These divisions are not ordained for all time, as some people may think. They are the artificial product of class society and will fall with it. And a great fall it will be.

Emancipation of women

The emancipation of women will begin in the very first days of the workers' government, and very probably will be fully completed before the socialist society emerges from the transition period. The first condition for the real emancipation of women is their economic emancipation. That must presuppose the scientific organization of housework, like all other work, so that women too can have time and leisure for cultural activity and the free choice of occupation. That will imperatively require the establishment of communal kitchens, housekeeping services, nurseries and kindergartens.

The average poor housewife in this country is made to think that she was born into this glorious world for the chief purpose of fighting dust and wrestling pots and pans. That's not true. Women are capable of participating in all avenues of activity, in all trades, in all sciences, in all arts. Enough have already broken through to demonstrate that.

One thing I'm absolutely sure is going to happen early in the period of the workers' government, maybe during the first five-year plan. Under the slogan of more efficiency in production, reinforced by moral arguments which are powerful in the case – the rights of women to leisure and freedom for cultural and spiritual growth – there will be a tremendous popular movement of women to bust up this medieval institution of 40 million separate kitchens and 40 million different housewives cooking, cleaning, scrubbing, and fighting dust.

Thirty or 40 million women every day of the year trudging to the market, each one loading her separate basket and lugging it home to cook 30 or 40 million different meals for 30 or 40 million different

families. What a terrible waste of energy, waste of productivity; to say nothing of the cultural waste; to say nothing of the imposition upon the women victims. The enlightened socialist women will knock the hell out of this inefficient, unjust and antiquated system. The mass emergence of the socialist women from the confining walls of their individual kitchens will be the greatest jail break in history – and the most beneficent. Women, liberated from the prison of the kitchen, will become the free companions of free men.

The drudgery of housework will be organized like any other division of labor, on an efficient communal basis, so that women can begin to have some leisure too. Cooking and house cleaning, like any other work, can be done much better, much quicker, in an organized, scientific manner. Proper air-conditioning and dust-catching “precipitrons” – which will be standard equipment for every home – will take care of most of the house cleaning automatically.

I cannot see why the average housewife, who isn’t specially trained for it or specially adapted to it, should want to bother with it. I cannot see why cooking, house cleaning, and janitor work shouldn’t be one of the national divisions of labor, for which various people take their turns in the process for a certain number of hours a day, a certain number of weeks in a year, however it may be allocated. Or if some people prefer to live communally, as many have found it advantageous, they’ll do that and simplify things still more.

By this forecast I do not mean to draw a picture of regimentation. Just the opposite, for any kind of regimentation such as that imposed by the present social order will be utterly repugnant to the free and independent citizens of the socialist future. They will live the way they want to live, and each individual – within the limits of his general obligation to society – will decide for himself. Better, in this case, say “herself” – for old-fashioned reactionaries who ignorantly think they know what “woman’s place” is, will run up against the hard fact – for the first time since class society began – that women will have something to say about that, and what they will say will be plenty.

What kind of homes will the people have under socialism, what kind of home life? I don't know, and neither does anyone else. But they will have the material means and the freedom of choice to work out their own patterns. These two conditions, which are unknown to the great majority today, will open up limitless vistas for converting the "home" from a problem and a burden into a self-chosen way of life for the joy of living.

Homes will not be designed by real-estate promoters building for profit – which is what the great bulk of "home building" amounts to today. The people will have what they want. They can afford to have it any way they want it. If some of them want a house of their own in the country, and if they want to have their cooking and their house cleaning done on the present basis, nobody will stop them. But I imagine they will evoke public curiosity and quizzical glances. People will say: "They've got a perfect right to do that but they don't have to."

Every man can have his little house as he has it now, and his little wife spending her whole time cooking and cleaning for him – providing he can find that kind of a wife. But he will not be able to buy such service, and he'll be rather stupid to ask for it. Most likely his enlightened sweetheart will tell him: "Wake up, Bud; we're living under socialism. You've been reading that ancient history again and you've a nostalgia for the past. You've got to break yourself of that habit. I'm studying medicine, and I have no time to be sweeping up dust. Call up the Community Housecleaning Service."

Eradication of racism

I must also break the news to the Southern crackers and their Northern cousins, and other members of the Jim Crow fraternity, that under socialism America will no longer be "a white man's country". It will belong to the colored people too. They will own as much of it as anyone else and share to the full, without let or hindrance, all its bountiful prosperity and abundance, all its freedoms, rights and privileges – without any exceptions whatever.

The socialist society based on human solidarity will have no use for such unscientific and degrading inhuman notions as the idea that one man is superior to another because, many thousands of years ago, the ancestors of the first lived in an environment that produced in the course of time a lighter skin color than was produced by the environment of the ancestors of the second.

The Jim Crow gangsters who strut around in self-satisfied ignorance as representatives of the “superior” race may have to learn their mistake the hard way, but they will learn – or “be learned” – just the same. The Negroes will play a great and decisive role in the revolution, in alliance with the trade unions and the revolutionary party; and in that grand alliance they will demonstrate and conquer their right to full equality.

The Negroes will very probably be among the best revolutionists. And why shouldn't they be? They have nothing to lose but their poverty and discrimination, and a whole world of prosperity, freedom, and equality to gain. You can bet your boots the Negroes will join the revolution to fight for that – once it becomes clear to them that it cannot be gained except by revolution. The black battalions of the revolution will be a mighty power – and great will be their reward in the victory.

As in the emancipation of women, the emancipation of the Negroes will begin with the absolute and unconditional abolition of every form of economic discrimination and disadvantage, and proceed from that to full equality in all domains. Race prejudice will vanish with the ending of the social system that produced and nourished it. Then the human family will live together in peace and harmony, each of its sons and daughters free at last to make the full contribution of his or her talents to the benefit of all.

Revolution in Cultural Life

The present big and crowded, ugly, unhealthy cities – I was asked at a previous lecture – what will happen to them? They will be no more.

Once the transition period has been passed through, once all the problems of abundance and plenty have been solved, the people will want also to live right in the larger sense – to provide for their cultural and aesthetic aspirations. They will have a great hunger and thirst for beauty and harmony in all the surroundings of their lives. These monster cities we live in today are blights of modern society. They will certainly give way to planned cities interlinked to the countryside. Everybody will live with the natural advantages of the country and the cultural associations of the town. All the Marxist authorities were emphatic on this point. The crowded slums and the isolated, godforsaken farm houses will be demolished at about the same time.

A new science and new art will flower – the science and art of city planning. There is such a profession today, but the private ownership of industry and real estate deprives it of any real scope. Under socialism some of the best and most eager students in the universities will take up the study of city planning, not for the profitable juxtaposition of slums and factory smokestacks, but for the construction of cities fit to live in. Art in the new society will undoubtedly be more cooperative, more social. The city planners will organize landscapers, architects, sculptors, and mural painters to work as a team in the construction of new cities which will be a delight to live in and a joy to behold.

Communal centers of all kinds will arise to serve the people's interests and needs. Centers of art and centers of science. Jack London in the *Iron Heel*, speaking in the name of an inhabitant of the future socialist society, referred as a matter of course to the numerous "Wonder Cities" which had been given poetic names – "Ardis", "Asgard" and so on; wonder cities designed for beauty, for ease of living, for attractiveness to the eye and to the whole being.

Farming, of course, will be reorganized like industry on a large scale. The factory farm is already in existence to a large extent in the West. Tens of thousands of acres in single units are operated with modern machine methods and scientific utilization of the soil, for the private profit of absentee owners. These factory farms will not be broken up. They will be taken over and developed on a vaster scale.

Eventually the whole of agricultural production be conducted on the basis of factory farms. The agricultural workers will not live in cultural backwardness, in lonely, isolated farm houses. They will live in the town and work in the country, just as the factory worker will live in the country and work in the town.

The separation between manual and intellectual labor will be broken down. The division between specialized knowledge of single subjects and ignorance on the rest which is a characteristic feature of capitalism, will be eliminated. The half-men, produced by these artificial divisions, who know only one thing and can do only one thing, will give way to the whole men who can do many things and know something about everything.

There will be a revolution in art. The class society, which splits the population into separate and antagonistic groups of the privileged and the deprived, splits the personality of the artist, too. A few selected people have the opportunity to study and practice art, remote from the life of the people. At the same time, not thousands, but millions of children have the spark of talent, or even of genius, snuffed out before it has a chance to become a flame. Children of the poor, who like to draw already in school, soon have to put all those ideas out of their minds. They can't afford to be drawing pictures. They have to learn some trade where they can make a living, and forget about their artistic aspirations.

In the new society everybody will be an artist of some sort or other, and every artist will be a worker. Education will be for intellectual pursuits and manual occupations simultaneously, from childhood to old age. Marx was of the emphatic opinion that children should engage in productive labor from the age of nine, not at the expense of their "education" but as an essential part of it. From an early age, children will learn to use tools and to make something useful to the people. The child will have the satisfaction of learning by doing, and the satisfaction of being useful and productive even when he's a child.

Then older people will begin to treat him more respectfully. They will regard him, also, from an early age, as a human being, as a citizen,

as a producer who shouldn't be treated as a baby any longer. He will be reasoned with and talked to and treated as an equal, not beaten or scolded or shouted at, or pushed into a corner. Marx said: "Children must educate their parents." And in some respects they will do that, too, when they get a fair chance.

There will be such a revolution in the relations of children and parents as we can hardly conceive of in this monstrous class society of the present. Parents often think they have been endowed by some mysterious supernatural power with the right to abuse and mistreat children. Primitive man never had such rights, never dreamed of such things. It is only due to the degeneration which followed the introduction of private property that the mistreatment of children and the double mistreatment of women became the rule. Primitive man in his natural state never knew such things. And the future society will know them still less.

Every child who has a talent for music or drawing or sculpting or molding or writing – and there is no such thing as a child without some talent – can become an artist of one sort or another. One who has an instinct and feeling for words can become a writer. There will be poets who will glorify the great theme of human solidarity, and they will not be starved and ridiculed as they are in this ignorant society. The poets will be honored, perhaps above all, because they have more insight than any others.

All-sided cultural development under socialism will not be some special gift or opportunity for favored individuals, but the heritage of all. The socialist man will have the most priceless of all possessions. He will have time. He will have leisure. He will have time and the means to live, to play, to grow, to travel, to realize to the full the expression of his human personality. And that will not be the exception, but the rule. There will be a whole race of people enjoying and expressing all those things.

I have a theory – again a personal opinion and not a program – that there will be two kinds of labor under socialism. All, without exception, will participate in the organized productive process, the

source of the people's maintenance and abundance. But that will take up only a small amount of time, as already indicated. Then, I visualize another form of purely voluntary labor, unorganized, anarchistic, practiced as a means of artistic self-expression, and freely given for the general good or as a service of friendship.

Resurgence of Handicrafts

Handicrafts, once the basic form of production, were virtually wiped out by the development of capitalism because of their comparative inefficiency, and many of the old skills of the artisans have been lost. The cooperative machine process, which produced more things faster and easier, eliminated handicraft as a serious factor in the productive process, and this progressive historical development can never be reversed.

But under socialism, where machine industry will be developed to the highest degree, producing even more abundantly many times over than at the present stage of its development, I can foresee a revival, a new flowering of handicrafts on a new basis. If this is theoretically inadmissible as a form of labor in the socialist society, perhaps my speculative suggestion can be considered under the heading of art.

I spoke before of the artificial division between intellectual and manual labor, and the half-men this division produces. The whole man of the socialist future will not be content merely to know what he reads in books, or to write books, or to confine himself exclusively to any other purely intellectual occupation. He will be trained from childhood to use his hands productively and creatively, and he will have plenty of time to exercise his skills in any way he sees fit; to do what he wants to do, what he likes to do.

I should imagine that under such conditions man, the tool-using animal, will assert himself once again. There will be a resurgence of freelance cabinetmakers, shoemakers, hand tailors, bookbinders, etc. These artisans of the future won't compete with machine industry – that would be anachronistically absurd – but will ply their crafts as a

special form of recreation and artistic self-expression, and to make gifts for friends. If they want to do it that way, who is going to stop them?

In the present society very few get a chance to do the work they really want to do, and thereby they are deprived of life's most solid satisfaction. "Blessed is he who has found his work", said Carlyle. But how many are so blessed? Most people do what seems best to make a living. Those who are able to choose their work, and to persist in it at all costs, are very rare.

Taking the present society as it is, I personally have had the work I wanted, that I thought the time required, the occupation I was made for – that of a professional revolutionist. But in a socialist society, where there will be no need and no room for social struggles or revolution, the likes of me would have to find another trade. I have thought that under such circumstances I would be a cabinetmaker, as my grandfather was, a man who took pride in his fine work with wood and tools. Another would be a bookbinder, another a shoemaker, another a tailor – there are a lot of fine old crafts which will challenge the ingenious and the tool minded.

Under socialism people will not fear to love their neighbor lest they be taken advantage of, nor be ashamed of disinterested friendship, free from all self-interest and calculation. There will be powerful impulses to give things to each other, and the only possible way of giving will be by doing, by making. There will be no chance to "buy" a present for anybody – because nothing will be for sale; and besides, everybody will be free to take anything he needs from the superabundant general store of material things rolling from the assembly lines. Presents, to mean anything, will have to be *made*, outside the general process. I think they will be, and such gifts will be really treasured and displayed on special occasions.

I imagine that when a man goes to his wedding, he'll wear a coat of many colors, like Joseph in the Bible, handmade for him by a friend who is an expert tailor, who has made it for him as a service of love. On holidays, he'll wear a handmade shoe, molded to his own foot by a friend who is a craftsman, who takes pride in his perfect work. And

when he, in turn, wants to present a gift to a friend, he will make it for him.

Your house, the house of the well-regulated family, will have as the things it is proudest of, certain things specially made for you by people who like you. This easy chair made to your own measure by your friend so-and-so. This hand-mortised hardwood bookcase made for you by a cabinetmaker, as a gift. And those pictures and decorations on the walls – they were not machine stamped at the factory, but hand painted especially for you by an artist friend. And your important and most treasured books, which came well-bound from the print shops of the socialist society, have been rebound in fancy leather, by an old-fashioned bookbinder, a real craftsman. He does this outside his general contribution to the cooperative labor process, as a form of creative self-expression and as an act of friendship. I think it will be a great joy and satisfaction to be an expert craftsman in the coming time.

Transformation of Morality

Morality, which in class society is either a hypocritical cover for material self-interest, or an escapist withdrawal from the harsh realities of the class struggle, will be changed inside out. The advancement of individual special interests at the expense of others – the highest standard of capitalist society – is summed up in the slogan: “Getting Ahead” – which means, getting ahead of others. It is the root cause of lying, demagoguery, and deception, which are the central features in every election campaign, in advertising, and in all mediums of information and communication. The people are bombarded with lies every day of their lives. Capitalist morality itself is a lie.

There can be no doubt whatever that the new society will have a different morality. It will be a social morality based on human solidarity, having no need of lies, deception, demagoguery, and hypocrisy. Those who cannot conceive of any human relationship without the “getting ahead” philosophy of capitalism say socialism would not “work” because people would have no incentives. They really have a

low opinion of the human race. Incentives will not be lacking. But they will be different.

For one thing public opinion, uncontaminated by phony propaganda, will be a powerful force, as it was in the unspoiled primitive societies before people knew anything about private property and special class interests. The desire to be approved by one's associates will be a powerful incentive. In the new society the most useful people will be acclaimed, not the most "successful" in the business of getting ahead of others; not the rich exploiters, the slick fakers, the lying politicians, and the generals famed for slaughter.

The youth will venerate heroes of a new type – the scientist, the artist, the poet; the inventor who discovers a means of shortening the labor time necessary in this or that occupation; the agricultural expert who discovers a new way of breeding seed and making bigger crops. The applause and approval of the people will be the highest incentive and the highest reward of the socialist man.

Scope for ambition will not be lacking either. The socialist people will be completely alive and animated by driving ambitions. But their ambitions will have a different motivation and a different direction. Struggle is the law of life, and so it will be under socialism. But under socialism the struggle of men against each other for personal gain will give way to the struggle for ideas; to competition and rivalry in serving and advancing the general good of all; and to their cooperative struggle to complete the conquest of nature.

The people will struggle cooperatively – and through the competition of alternate plans – to move mountains, to change the course of rivers, to control climate, and to get the full benefit of all its changes. They will organize huge migrations with the seasons. Why should only the birds have the right to move south when it gets cold in the north? The rich have already claimed this right. The people who own New York, for example, don't live there much of the time. They spend their summers in Bar Harbor, Maine, where it's cool and breezy, and their winters in Florida, on the sunny beach. Some of them travel to other countries with the changing seasons. They stop over in New

York only in the spring and fall when the New York weather is better than that of Maine or Florida. That, it seems to me, is a very sensible way to live – if you can afford it.

A World Without Violence

Under socialism, everybody will be able to afford to live comfortably and to travel freely, without passports. Can you imagine people living in Chicago in the wintertime, when they might be in California on a six-months vacation? Nobody ever saw the sun in Chicago from Labor Day to the Fourth of July; but here – I am told – it shines every day in the year – even when it's raining.

Some people who have lived in a frost-bound place all their lives may continue for some years, even under the new society, just from tradition, habit, and ignorance. But once you get them to come to the Land of the Sundown Sea on a trial journey, and see what California is like on the 23rd day of January, they will never be the same again. And the daring souls, the pioneers who will find this out, will write letters back and the word will pass, and the idea will grow up amongst the people in the frozen north: "Why shouldn't we, with all our abundance – we can afford it, we have plenty – why shouldn't we travel around and enjoy climate with the seasons – just like the birds."

The people will have ambition, under socialism, to explore the great universe and to unlock its secrets, and to extract from their knowledge new resources for the betterment of all the people. They will organize an all-out war against sickness and disease and there will be a flowering of the great science of medicine. They will look back with indignation, when they read in their history books that at one time people had to live in a society where there was a shortage of doctors, artificially maintained. I believe it can be said with certainty that among the heroes of the new society, whom the youth will venerate, will be the doctors of all kinds who will really be at the service of man in the struggle for the conquest of those diseases which lay him

low. Man's health will be a major concern, and sickness and disease a disgrace, not to the victim, but to the society which permits it.

Having conquered nature, having solved the problems of material existence, having taken care of the problem of health, the socialist man will begin finally – as Trotsky forecast in his brilliant work *Literature and Revolution* – to study, to know, and to conquer himself. The study and mastery of the body and the mind will bring the socialist man to physical and mental harmony and perfection, to the realization in life of the old aspiring motto: “a sound mind in a sound body” – producing a new race, the first worthy of the name of man.

Under socialism there will be no more private property, except for personal use. Consequently there can be no more crimes against private property – which are 90% or more of all the crimes committed today – and no need of all this huge apparatus for the prevention, detection, prosecution, and punishment of crimes against property. No need of jails and prisons, policemen, judges, probation officers, lawyers, bondsmen, social workers, bureaucrats; no need for guards, bailiffs, wardens, prosecutors, stool pigeons, informers, and professional perjurers. No need for this whole mass of parasitical human rubbish which represents the present-day state and which devours so much of the substance of the people.

With the end of classes and their conflicting interests there will be no more “politics”, because politics is essentially an expression of the class struggle; and no more parties, as they are now known, for parties are the political representatives of classes. That is not to say there won't be differences and heated debates. Groupings, we must assume, will arise in the course of these disputes. But they will not be based on separate class interests.

They will be “parties” based on differences of opinion as to what kind of an economic plan we should have; what great scheme of highways should be developed; what system of education; what type of architecture for the wonder cities. Differences on these, and numerous other questions of public interest and general concern, will give the competitive instincts of the people all kinds of room for free expression.

Groupings will be formed and contend with each other for popular support without “politics” or parties in the old sense of class struggle and the conflict of material interests.

In the classless society of the future there will be no state. The Marxist formula that the state will wither away and die out has a profound ultimate meaning, for the state is the most concentrated expression of violence. Where there is violence, there is no freedom. The society of the free and equal will have no need and no room for violence and will not tolerate it in any form. This was the profound conception of the great Marxists.

I recall that when I was very young, I read Jack London’s *Iron Heel* and got from there for the first time, in one single reference, a glimpse of the socialist future wherein violence will be unknown. In a footnote to the manuscript in this great book about the ruthless class war in capitalist society, ostensibly written by an editor in the socialist society, the author calls attention to an enigmatic expression in the story. One of the characters is described as having the build of a prizefighter, and the editor thought it was necessary to explain to the citizens of the socialist society what prizefighting meant. This footnote reads: “In that day it was the custom of men to compete for purses of money. They fought with their hands. When one was beaten into insensibility, or killed, the survivor took the money.” That had to be explained in the socialist society because they wouldn’t know it otherwise.

Trotsky, in his last testament, written in anticipation of death, said: “Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression and violence and enjoy it to the full.” Just ponder those words – Trotsky was a writer who weighed every word. His last injunction to the people who would follow him was: “Cleanse life of all violence.”

In a talk with Gorky, Lenin said the same thing in almost the same words: “Our ideal is not to use force against anyone.”

It is difficult for us to comprehend such a possibility, living in a society where even the smallest children are taught that they have to fight and scramble to protect themselves in a hostile world. We can

hardly visualize a world without violence. But that's what socialism means. That was the ultimate meaning of our farseeing teachers when they said that the state will wither away and eventually die out. They meant that eventually all violence of people against each other will wither away and cease to be.

The people will turn their attention then to that most important problem of all – the problem of the free development of the human personality. Then human nature will begin to change, or rather, to assert its real self. People will recover some of the virtues of primitive society, which was based on solidarity and cooperation, and improve them and develop them to a higher degree.

The Golden Future

Leisure is the condition for all cultural development. “The glory that was Greece”, justly celebrated in song and story, was the first great confirmation of this law. Ancient Greece, borrowing from other civilizations, produced the first truly cultured class. In some important respects it touched the highest peaks our race has yet known; and in the Golden Age of Pericles it came to its fullest flower. Its attainments in literature, the drama, sculpture, architecture, philosophy; in the beginnings of science and in the graces and amenities of civilized intercourse – are the original pattern from which Western civilization stems.

But that glorious Greece had a fatal flaw. Its leisure – and therefore its culture – were limited to a very narrow stratum of privileged aristocrats. It lacked the technological basis for *universal* leisure and culture. The society of ancient Greece rested on a base of dehumanized slave labor. It was surrounded by a world of barbarism. It was constantly embroiled in wars and eventually went down in ruins, and nothing was left of it but what is scratched on stone and preserved on parchment. A few ruins of the marvelous sculpture and architecture still stand to give an intimation of what was known and done 2500 years ago.

Socialist society will stand immeasurably higher than that of ancient Greece, even in its Golden Age. Machines and science will be the slaves, and they will be far more productive, a thousand, 10,000 times more productive, than the human slaves of ancient Greece. Under socialism, all will share in the benefits of abundance, not merely a favored few at the top. All the people will have time and be secure for an ever higher development.

All will be artists. All will be workers and students, builders and creators. All will be free and equal. Human solidarity will encircle the globe and conquer it and subordinate it to the uses of man.

That, my friends, is not an idle speculation. That is the realistic perspective of our great movement. We ourselves are not privileged to live in the socialist society of the future, which Jack London, in his far-reaching aspiration, called the Golden Future. It is our destiny, here and now, to live in the time of the decay and death agony of capitalism. It is our task to wade through the blood and filth of this outmoded, dying system. Our mission is to clear it away. That is our struggle, our law of life.

We cannot be citizens of the socialist future, except by anticipation. But it is precisely this anticipation, this vision of the future, that fits us for our role as soldiers of the revolution, soldiers of the liberation war of humanity. And that, I think, is the highest privilege today, the occupation most worthy of a civilized man. No matter whether we personally see the dawn of socialism or not, no matter what our personal fate may be, the cause for which we fight has social evolution on its side and is therefore invincible. It will conquer and bring all mankind a new day.

It is enough for us, I think, if we do our part to hasten on the day. That's what we're here for. That's all the incentive we need. And the confidence that we are right and that our cause will prevail, is all the reward we need. That's what the socialist poet, William Morris, had in mind, when he called us to

*Join in the only battle
Wherein no man can fail,
For who so fadeth and dieth
Yet his deeds shall still prevail.*



Speak Out Now

Revolutionary Workers Group

Where We Stand

The world we live in today has enormous possibilities: the potential to open up the most challenging epoch of humanity's existence. We have the prospect of living in a conscious fashion, using all the advances of human knowledge and engaging the creative potential of each person on the planet. Instead we see the world moving in the opposite direction – increasingly ruled by prejudice and fear, a world of widespread violence and war, where exploitation and oppression are the rule, with the many dominated by the few.

The Force for Change Exists Today

Everywhere, working people's labor makes society run. The exploitation of labor is what generates profits, which are at the heart of capitalism. Working people have the power to bring this system to a halt and bring about the changes needed to transform our lives. Like slavery, feudalism and other systems that enriched the minority at the expense of the majority, capitalism's removal is long overdue. The time for socialism has come.

We Stand for Socialism

A world based on peaceful collaboration and international cooperation of working class people – not the exploiters who rule today.

- The common ownership and sharing of the world's resources and productive capacity under the democratic control of the world's peoples.

- An egalitarian and democratic government, organized and controlled from the bottom up, which facilitates people's active participation in making decisions about how society is run.
- Protection of the world's ecological systems, putting science to work to sustain life, not destroy it.
- A society where human relations are based on respect, equality and dignity of all peoples, not racism, sexism or homophobia.

Our Political Heritage

We base ourselves on the ideas and actions of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the model of the Russian Revolution of 1917 when the working class showed its capacity to take over and exert its power, and on the revolutionary ideas of the Fourth International in its struggles against Stalinism.

We Must Go Beyond Reforms

We support the struggles of those who are fighting against the oppression of capitalism, even if the goals of those struggles are not aimed at replacing the capitalist order. We support the right of people to determine how they will live and to throw off the forces of imperialism – be it the domination of the corporations, the World Bank, the IMF, military forces or other agents of imperialism. We support the fight against racial and sexual discrimination. We fight against attacks on the standard of living of working people — wage and benefit cuts, attacks on health care, education, housing and other basic rights.

Socialism cannot come through a modification of the existing system. It is not replacing corrupt politicians or union officials with those who are more honest or who are willing to see more of society's resources shared with the poor. It is not getting better contracts or laws. These systems based on privilege and exploitation must be removed and replaced by one that can guarantee the reorganization of society for the benefit of all.

What Is Needed to Bring This Change About?

It will take a massive social struggle, a revolution, by the majority, the workers and poor of the world, with the working class at its head, taking power in its name and reorganizing society.

It will take the construction of an international revolutionary leadership actively engaged in these struggles.

It will take the development of a party, based in the working class, in the U.S., the richest country of the world, as part of this international leadership. The fate of the world depends on building such an organization, though today it is represented only by individuals or small groups, scattered and marginalized, who share those goals.

The decisions made by a few individuals today, who are ready to start acting on these ideas and who are willing to collaborate with other groups who agree with this program and who are ready to work to implement it, could play a role in determining the future of the world.

Who We Are

Speak Out Now/Revolutionary Workers Group is a revolutionary group. We believe that a socialist world is possible and can be brought into being by the active struggles of the majority of the people of the world. We believe the international working class is the social force that can transform society and create a new world. But to do so, revolutionary organizations must be built in the working class. For this reason, our group aims its activity primarily at large workplaces. Our newsletters are distributed at several workplaces every two weeks.

We think it is important to both analyze the current world situation as well as to know and understand the history of past struggles. We have forums on current events and political topics and a yearly weekend called the Revolutionary University. We organize Marxist discussions and classes. We have pamphlets on past working class struggles, the revolutionary movements around the world and the current problems we face. We organize with others around many issues – racism, immigrant rights, climate change, police brutality, and more.

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