

## Winning a World (November 1905)

The socialist movement is as wide as the world, and its mission is to win the world — the whole world — from animalism, and consecrate it to humanity.

What a tremendous task!

And what a royal privilege to share in it!

To win a world is worthy of a race of gods. And in the winning, men develop godlike attributes, since all men are potential gods.

To the strained and vigilant eye of the socialist on the watchtower all is well in point of outlook. Capitalism has had its day of carnage and its crimson sun is slowly but surely sinking in the west. Not more certain is the sunrise on the morrow than the coming of the sure-evolving cooperative commonwealth. A million years of history — the history of animalism, of jungles and lairs, and savage strife — are hastening to their culmination.

In the preface to his *Evolution of Man*,<sup>1</sup> Bölsche<sup>2</sup> says: “Man and his history reach back into the primitive world of animal monsters, but this animal nature, this primitive world, lies prostrate at his feet, overcome by himself.”

Not yet conquered, as we believe, is this primitive world, nor yet prostrate is this animal monster at the feet of man, but the consummation so devoutly wished is surely at hand, for we know that the palpable evidence of the early disappearance of capitalism marks the concluding phase of man’s age-long animal struggle for existence.

What a madhouse the earth would seem today in the frenzied revelry of capitalism but for the light the socialistic philosophy sheds upon it!

What alpine peaks of wealth and what desert wastes of poverty, despair, and death!

What man, unless his heart be adamant, can contemplate this awful scene and be content?

What man, unless his brain be atrophied and his vision blinded, can fail to perceive the impending crisis?

In the presence of this vast and terrible phenomenon, how satisfying to be enlisted in the socialist movement, to understand its doubt-dispelling social philosophy and to interpret passing events in the clear light of its science.

The capitalist regime is but a passing phase of civilization — the product of social evolution. It has attained its full dimensions, executed the mandate of history, and yet, with all the evils with which it may be charged, it has been of inestimable value to humanity. The capitalist era will be monumental in history, not so much for its own achievements as for what it has made possible after it has passed away.

The historic mission of capitalism has been to exploit the forces of nature, place them at the service of man, augmenting his productive capacity a thousandfold to turn, as if by magic, the shallow, sluggish streams into rushing, roaring Niagaras of wealth — wealth to be poured into its own capitalist reservoirs, leaving to the toilers who produced it but greater poverty, insecurity, and anguish than before.

The mission of socialism is to release these imprisoned productive forces from the vandal horde that has seized them, that they may be operated, not spasmodically and in the interest of a favored class, as at present, but freely and in the common interest of all.

Then the world — the world the socialist movement is to win from capitalism — will be filled with wealth for all to have and to enjoy in its abundance.

And why not?

Nothing is so easily produced as wealth.

The earth is one vast mass of raw materials. Hidden in every passing breeze, in every wave, in gurgling fountain, ray of sun, and errant lightning are the magic forces to transmute this inert mass into the myriad forms of wealth, and in such fabulous abundance as to banish for all time the gaunt and hideous specter of want, and make old earth fit for human habitation, the first time since it rolled in space.

And this is coming to pass as certain as the rivers find their way to the sea. Coming neither obedient to nor contrary to the desires of men, but through the inexorable laws of social evolution. Approaching the end of capitalism and the beginning of socialism, that is, the end of animalism and the beginning of humanity, the vision is so clarified that we have infinitely clearer perceptions and loftier conceptions of the destiny of the human race than ever before.

Truly does Bölsche speak in his *Evolution of Man*, already quoted, when he says: “Our civilization has at last risen to the point of impressing us with the fact that this many-headed mass of fifteen hundred million people on the surface of this globe are bound by one common tie of sacredness which is expressed in the word, man!”

The era of mechanical invention and industrial transformation has brought us to this common point of view. The productive mechanism in modern industry, vast, complex, marvelous beyond expression, spurns the impotent touch of the individual hand, but leaps, as if in joy, to its task when caressed by the myriad-fingered collective son of modern toil.

The mute message of the machine!

Could but the worker understand, and would he but heed it!

Child of his brain, the machine has come to free, and not to enslave; to save, and not to destroy the author of its being. Potent and imperious as the command of an industrial Jehovah, the machine compels the grand army of toil to rally to its standard, to recognize its power, to surrender body-breaking and soul-devouring tasks, to join hands in sacred fellowship, to subdivide labor, to equalize burdens, to demand joy and leisure for all, and, emancipated from the fetters of the flesh, to rise to the sublimest heights of intellectual, moral, and spiritual exaltation.

To realize this great social ideal is a work of education and organization. The working class must be aroused. They must be made to hear the trumpet call of solidarity.

Economic solidarity and political solidarity!

One great, all-embracing industrial union and one great, all-embracing political party, and both revolutionary to the core — two hearts with but a single soul.

The modern tool of production must belong to those who made use of it — whose freedom, yea, whose very lives depend upon it.

A hundred years ago the collective ownership of the individual tool would have been absurd; today, the private ownership of the collective tool is a crime. This crime is at the foundation of every other that disfigures society, and from its sub-cellars exude the festering stench of our sweatshop civilization.

Educate the working class!

Spread *Wilshire's Magazine*, the weekly socialist papers, the pamphlets, tracts, and leaflets among the people!

Turn on the stream so deep and swift that the workers who will not be lifted by it will be swept away and perish in it!

The middle class see their doom in capitalism, and must soon turn to socialism. The handwriting is on all the billboards of the universe. The worst in socialism will be better than the best in capitalism.

When enough have become socialists — and each day is augmenting the number and making them more staunch and resolute — they will sweep the country on the only vital issue before the people.

A new power will be in control!

The people!

For the first time in history the working class will be free and no class will be in subjection. The grandsons and granddaughters of the present capitalists will thank and honor the despised socialists of today for the freedom and civilization they enjoy.

Paul Lafargue is right in declaring that the capitalist himself is sorely in need of escape from the hell of capitalism.

His graphic words have startling vividness:

The leading capitalists, the millionaires and billionaires, are sad specimens of the human race, useless and hurtful. The mark of degeneracy is upon them. Their sickly offspring are old at birth. Their organs are sapped with diseases. Exquisite meats and wines load down their tables, but the stomach refuses to digest them; women, expert in love, perfume their couches with youth and beauty, but their senses are benumbed. They own palatial dwellings in enchanting sites, and they have no eyes, no feeling for joyful nature, with its eternal youth and change. Sated and disgusted with everything, they are followed everywhere by ennui as by their shadows. They yawn at rising, and when they go to bed; they yawn at their feasts and their orgies. They began yawning at their mother's womb.

The picture is not overdrawn; it is true to nature — perverted nature — and these deformities are well calculated to excite the pity rather than the hatred of normal beings.

Capitalism (continues Lafargue), bankrupt, old, useless, and hurtful, has finished its historic mission; it persists as ruling class only through its acquired momentum. The proletariat of the twentieth century will execute the decree of history; will drive it from its position of social control. Then the stupendous work in science and industry accomplished by civilized humanity, at the price of such toil and suffering, will engender peace and happiness; then will this vale of tears be transformed into an earthly paradise.

The author of this eloquent characterization has the keen insight of the philosopher, illuminated by flashes from a poetic soul.

The prophecy he makes is based upon science, and its fulfillment is inevitable.

The international socialist movement, from mountain peak and smiling plain, from every land and every sea, proclaims its mission to

win the world from capitalist barbarism and consecrate it to the human family.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Bölsche, *The Evolution of Man*. Ernest Untermann, trans. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1905.

<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm Bölsche (1861-1939) was a German socialist who wrote extensively on themes related of natural science, seeking to popularize current discourse on evolution and other large subjects for a lay audience.