

SOCIALISM **and** **HUMAN NATURE**

By Arnold Petersen



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By **ARNOLD PETERSEN**

1.

A great deal of water has flowed under the bridge since last I addressed an Akron audience of S.L.P. members and sympathizers. And I might add that a great deal of working class blood has been poured into the bottomless ocean of proletarian misery and sorrow since that day in September 1940, when we discussed together the hope-inspiring subject of Socialism as the Democracy of Tomorrow. The war which we then with dread anticipated, but which hopefully we thought might yet be averted, is now upon us. For the nonce the spirit of the dead past has stolen a march on us, and we are for the moment helplessly, but not hopelessly nor unresistingly, in the grip of forces momentarily beyond the control of any man or group. The world, and particularly the world's working class, is paying an enormous and bloody penalty for disregarding the warnings of social science and ignoring the logic and pleas of the Socialist Labor Party.

It is now springtime, and yet it is the bleak winter of man's discontent. But nature, as always oblivious of man's folly, proceeds to perform her perennial wonders. More than 500 years ago Chaucer wrote the famous prologue to his

Canterbury Pilgrims, which opens with these immortal lines:

“When the sweet showers from skies of April blue
The drought of March have pierced through and
through
And bathed each vein in sap whose silent power
Quickens the bud and nourishes the flower.”¹

Thus England’s great poet greeted a spring day at the very dawn of our modern civilization when after a thousand-year night humanity at last began to awaken from the stupor induced by feudal slavery and priestly superstitions. Hope sang through these lines, hope of a new day, of a new order, of release from thralldom even as the earth was being unfettered and released from the savage bondage of winter. It was a time when man felt himself happily as one with nature, and when returning spring surely brought joy to him and gladness of heart.

Another spring. And how is it greeted in this year of 1942? I quote these lines from a leading editorial that appeared in a recent issue (March 31, 1942) of the *New York Herald Tribune*—“herald,” mind you, but a herald of what? Listen:

“It is nearly April, and the new season of slaughter in Europe is about to begin. Some of the familiar preliminary signs have already been recorded.”

Thus greets plutocracy’s organ the recurrent wonder of spring! Whereas old Chaucer spoke of the sweet liquid which flooded the tender roots, quickening life; and of the soft west wind that awakened every wood and heath, corrupt and murderous capitalism hails spring as the season of slaughter and destruction. No soft west wind bringing joy and beauty to the earth, but a hurricane of death and disaster with sorrow and wailings in its wake; no sweet liquid quickening life, but the precious crimson fluid oozing from the bodies of dying men, women and children

¹ Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,
And smalle foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages).....

in nameless agony and futile endeavor; no little birds singing sweetly in sheltering wood and over sun-drenched meadows, but the roar of cannons, and the raucous notes of carrion over scorched earth and reeking fields of slaughter; no canopy of April blue over gardens redolent with blooms, but a blackened sky belching forth stifling smoke and poisonous fumes, with shrieking, bursting bombs turning blooming gardens into graveyards and into stinking craters of blasted hopes and shattered dreams.

And men despair, and in their folly and ignorance they blame it all solely on human nature, in so doing sealing (so far as they are concerned) the doom of mankind to the end of all time. And when the sane Marxist protests that not human nature is at fault, but the temporary perversion of human nature due to manmade causes, and urges that Socialism will rout these evils, insure against recurrence, and remain as the hope and only salvation of humanity, many will shake their heads and repeat mechanically: It is all due to frail and wicked human nature. And they will add insult to self-inflicted injury, and insist that Socialism, above all, is against human nature! Or they will think up some equally irrelevant and groundless objections to Socialism that range all the way from the utterly trivial and ridiculous to objections of tragic fatuousness and pathetic futility.

2.

Yes, the objections advanced against Socialism are, indeed, many, and most of them weird. On the other hand, most of these objections are similar to those advanced against past revolutionary movements or thoroughgoing proposals for social changes. We need go back no farther than the period when woman suffrage was the question that agitated the minds of men and women everywhere in this country, and the claims of which set all the owls of superstition, privilege and prejudice a-fluttering. And going back just a few decades farther we find that almost the identical objections were hurled at the Abolitionists whose agitation against chattel slavery brought out from their hiding places the same bats and owls of that period.

The arguments against Socialism are the arguments against social progress generally; they are arguments picked from the tree of vested interests that grows in the soil nurtured by the sweat and blood of human slavery. They are the arguments

ever advanced by those whose souls and minds are tormented and racked by fear of losing their “little pile”—losing their places in the sun—and of fear of those in bondage (economic bondage or absolute slavery, it matters not)—fear of those who have nothing to lose but their chains, and in losing which a world and a life of freedom and plenty are their gains! But if we examine the cream of these stock objections to Socialism, or to progress generally, we shall find that they are in sum and substance the argument that Socialism is incompatible with human nature. “It is a beautiful dream,” we are told, “but it is against human nature!”

It is against human nature! So rang the cry, we may imagine, when the bolder among our primitive ancestors first took to trees! And the same cry no doubt resounded through the forest when the boldest of tree-dwellers decided to return to the plains! “It is against human nature,” muttered the last defender of ancient communism, when private property and territorial demarcations were first introduced! “It is contrary to man’s nature to live in peace and freedom,” said the old feudal masters; “the many must be ruled by God’s anointed, or else they perish!” But the rising capitalist class would answer: “It is contrary to human nature to submit to an idle useless aristocracy. To fulfill our human destiny, to round out our human nature, we must have freedom from feudal restraints.” And since this happened but yesterday, we can almost hear them arguing the point: “It is in human nature that we should carry on trade and manufacture, and it is part of that same human nature that a large portion of the population should labor for wages—and for as low wages as possible—and that the mass should submit to the opinions and wishes of our class, the capitalist class, to whom a wise providence assigned the stewardship of the earth, and all that can be fashioned out of the earth!”

—“Slavery is ordained of God,” shrieked the priesthood of the South! “It is against Negro human nature that the Negro should be free!”—“It is against female human nature that women should vote—woman’s place is in the home,” chanted the opponents of woman’s suffrage scarcely more than two decades ago! And, therefore, of course—because all these things were against or according to human nature (or were they!?), “Socialism runs counter to human nature!” And, in the light of the past, this latest addition to the things that allegedly cannot be reconciled with human nature is one of the strongest proofs that *they* are right who insist that never was a principle and a plan more closely allied to human nature than Socialism!

An outstanding American poet, publicist and lecturer, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, has brilliantly epitomized in satirical verse the age-old cry that the revolutionary proposal of each particular age is against human nature. Charlotte Perkins Gilman was once a member of the Socialist Labor Party, but, by temperament unsuited to organizational routine activities, and chafing under organizational discipline, she dropped out of the Party around the time of the split in 1899. However, so far as I know, she remained a convinced Socialist until she died a few years ago. De Leon referred to her as “the talented Charlotte Perkins Gilman,” and frequently quoted approvingly from her “brilliantly satirical poems,” as he once designated them. In one of these—“Similar Cases” is the title—she treats the theme of all important changes or revolutionary proposals having invariably been denounced as contrary to animal or human nature. The young Eohippus, ancestor of the horse, confides to his elders that one of these days he is going to be a horse, with flowing tail and mane, and, he said with pride,

“I’m going to stand fourteen hands high
On the psychozoic plain.”

The horrified elders protest and sneer at him, and one of them delivered the final crushing argument:

“You always were as small
And mean as now we see,
And that’s conclusive evidence
That you’re always going to be.
What! Be a great, tall, handsome beast,
With hoofs to gallop on?
Why! You’d have to change your nature!”
Said the Loxolophodon.

And there was the case of the Anthropoidal Ape, who was very smart, and, therefore, naturally disliked by the rest. Well, the Ape declared that some day he was going to stand upright, hunt and fight and cut down the forest—in short, he declared he was going to be a man! The other apes ridiculed him, saying:

“In the first place,
The thing cannot be done!
And second, if it *could* be,
It would not be any fun!
And, third, and most conclusive,

And admitting no reply,
You would have to change your nature!
We should like to see you try!”

And then, finally, there was a Neolithic Man, who dreamed of the things *he* some day would do, and so, on a fine day, he delivered himself of this discourse to *his* elders:

Said he, “My friends, in course of time,
We shall be civilized!
We are going to live in cities!
We are going to fight in wars!
We are going to eat three times a day
Without the natural cause!
We are going to turn life upside down
About a thing called gold!
We are going to want the earth, and take
As much as we can hold!
We are going to wear great piles of stuff
Outside our proper skins!
We are going to have diseases!
And accomplishments! And Sins!!!”

Well that *was* the limit! The brazen fellow’s ideas were denounced as “chimerical,” “utopian” and “absurd”! And in chorus they howled at him:

“Before such things can come,
You idiotic child,
You must alter Human Nature!”
And they all sat back and smiled.
Thought they: “An answer to that last
It will be hard to find!”
It was a clinching argument
To the Neolithic Mind!

3.

And thus the strange cry resounds: “You must change Human Nature,” whenever a new forward step is about to be taken, though that step be ever so logical, in character as well as in sequence. For that cry, and its cousin, “It is against God’s will,” are in fact the declaration of bankruptcy of the old and worn-out

order of things. I am reminded here of a story which the redoubtable Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, once told in a letter to one of our so-called liberal weeklies. In his story Mr. Ickes quoted a letter written in 1828 by the School Board of Lancaster, Ohio, which read as follows (apparently some non-conformist citizens with new-fangled ideas had requested the use of the schoolhouse to propagate their ideas, and so this is what the 1828 Lancaster Nicholas Murray Butler replied):

“You are welcome to the use of the school house to debate all proper questions in, but such things as railroads and telegraphs are impossibilities and rank infidelity. There is nothing in the Word of God about them. If God had designed that His intelligent creatures [yes, “intelligent creatures,” that’s what they wrote!] should travel at the frightful speed of fifteen miles an hour by steam He would clearly have foretold it through His holy prophets. It is a device of Satan to lead immortal souls down to Hell.”

And so, indeed, it was, by all the standards of the neolithic mind!²

Now, let us look a little closer into this business of human nature; let us see what it really is, and whether it really changes, or whether it is necessary (assuming the possibility) to change it. As to the latter, there is, it seems, some confusion on the subject. There are some who say that, of course, you can change human nature, and that human nature has been changed again and again in the past. Others maintain that you cannot change human nature, and that there is no need whatever of doing it. I hold to the latter view, and I am sure Socialists generally do so too. You may debase or exalt human nature in particular cases; you may attempt to adjust, or rather apply, human nature to particular conditions, but, however much, and for whatever length of time, conditions may operate contrary to elemental human nature, the time eventually arrives when conditions are changed to conform to that which is basic in human nature.

But let us try to discover precisely what this basic human nature is—if there really is such a thing as clearly and definitely distinguishable from animal nature. I think we can agree that the following are basic and inherent, hence unchangeable, though varying in manifestations. First, I would mention the will to live, to survive, the instinct for self-preservation. Second, the craving for love—the love of man for woman and vice versa, or the instinct of reproduction. Third, the craving for

² Herbert Spencer records that Louis Adolphe Thiers, the butcher-in-chief of the Paris Commune, made the following remark while he was Minister of Public Works:

“I do not think railways are suited to France.”

And these are the towering intellects that rise above the plain level of average bourgeois mentality!

freedom, or the instinct of unhindered movement, the irrepressible desire to be untrammelled and unencumbered. Fourth, the gregarious instinct, the instinct that prompts human beings (and most animals) to herd together—an instinct which, in the case of the workers, lies at the very base of organization and Socialist production. I believe these four are basic, and in their most primitive manifestations they are, of course, as much animal nature as they are human nature. But since we are here concerned only about human beings, let us stick to the term human nature.

There are those who would add to these four. Some would argue that to fight is an ineradicable part of human nature—they call it man's combative instinct. Others argue that love of possession is inseparable from human nature, and sometimes they go so far as to say that there is in human nature a private property instinct! Others again would say that egoism and egotism are basic elements of human nature, and so on, and so forth. At best I would consider these last-mentioned secondary elements in human nature, some acquired and nurtured during age-long existence of certain social institutions, others merely minor manifestations of the basic elements. In other words, they may be said to be mere habits formed as a result of man-made conditions, not as a result of eternal and universal natural laws.

Undoubtedly a strong argument could be advanced to prove that the combative instinct in man is ineradicable. But if by combative we necessarily must mean physical fights, combats between individuals and groups, I disagree. Primarily the combative "instinct" springs from the overwhelming desire to live which is normal to all healthy human beings, and animals too, of course. The combative "instinct" need not at all be aggressive—it may as readily be, and originally no doubt was, purely defensive. And thus considered it is seen, then, to be a mere phase of what is often called the law of self-preservation, or the irrepressible urge to live, to survive, and, in a more general sense, and under less impelling provocation, it is a desire to be physically active, to exercise the body, and so on, in which case the combative instinct (conceding its presence) finds satisfaction in play, in competitive sports, and the like. Normally, it is in human nature to proceed along the lines of least resistance, and to fight, in an aggressive sense, is certainly not to do so, which leads to the conclusion that the lust for physical combat is not shared by the generality, but confined to a limited number of a certain type of human being, under special conditions and circumstances.

Love of possession is an acquired habit, and, however deeply rooted in temporary man, it is no part of human nature, properly speaking. Originally it was prompted, no doubt, by pressing necessities, resulting from inequality in a society based on scarcity. In a society based on the dog-eat-dog principle, it is a case of “grab what you can, hold on to it, and the devil take the hindmost.” In these latter days we have had a splendid illustration of this principle in the hoarding, resorted to by people who were frightened by the prospect of being unable to secure the things they were in the habit of enjoying, and which they would not willingly do without. But love of possession, in the sense of property-ownership, or private property, is purely an acquired passion, resulting from a man-made social arrangement, and capable of eradication with the disappearance of the temporary causes that called it forth. And when I say “temporary,” I speak, of course, in terms of social developments through thousands of years, but temporary, nevertheless, as compared with the eons during which man was almost entirely nature’s child, and without the man-made environment which left upon him a social imprint, or social characteristics, as distinguished from instinctive, natural characteristics, or the forming of natural or basic elements of human nature.

Early man knew nothing of private property. To the American Indian, for instance, the possession of private property would be (if he attempted to rationalize the matter) most unnatural—private property rights would, to him, be meaningless and contrary to human nature—to *his* human nature! On the other hand, to the white man it was unnatural that the Indian should not respect private property. As we know, when the Indian at first would make free with the white man’s property, he would be called a thief—a term utterly unintelligible to him. And, as we now understand, from these clashing manifestations of “human nature” resulted much of the trouble and bloody strife between the two races on this continent.

As for egoism and egotism, they, too, are mere byproducts, the former springing from the lust for life—the selfish assertion to live and survive—while the latter primarily reflects the false or unnatural spirit of an acquisitive society wherein materialistic things are coveted for the superior social status they may lend to the possessor. Most human beings may be what is called vain—all of us are vain in a degree—but ordinary vanity is harmless, and may even (within bounds) serve as a spur to self-improvement, whereas egotism, that is, corrosive or inordinate vanity and conceit, is destructive of the normal or healthier social impulses.

And so I think we may agree that what we call human nature is nothing more

than man's natural or normal craving for life, liberty and the circumstance-conditioned pursuit of happiness. And it is to the satisfaction of these three prized and priceless aims that all past and present endeavor, all of what we call civilization, have been dedicated. Hence, whatever does tend to serve these obviously works along with, and not against, human nature.

4.

It seems clear, then, that we are not required to change human nature when we desire to institute a new social order, which otherwise has for its required basis that which lies within material possibilities, and which, of course, does not run counter to basic human instincts. And that is the nub of the matter—not human nature, but material possibilities. If the adjustment of social institutions were permitted to take place with the same sense of detachment which accompanies, say, the adjustment of a business run for profit to the requirements of the market, no question of human nature could possibly arise. For instance, when for whatever reasons the market is over-supplied with a certain commodity, the industry supplying the commodity curtails its production. This invariably means the shutting down of plants, with resultant unemployment to thousands of workers. That, in turn, generally means starvation and slow death for vast numbers of workers and their families.

Now, it is certainly contrary to human nature to go without food, clothing and shelter. Yet, owners of such plants do not take that fact into account at all. They do not debate, solemnly and profoundly: Is it against human nature to go without food, etc.? And finding that it is, they do not conclude, resignedly or otherwise: Well, since closing down our plants produces a state of affairs that runs counter to human nature, we simply cannot close down our plants, for we know, and teach, that you cannot, and must not do something which is against human nature! Oh, no, nothing like that happens! And that, of course, raises suspicion that it is not human nature at all that bothers our beneficiaries and defenders of the present capitalist robber system, but loss of profits, lessening of material wealth, and the loss of power and privileges that go with possession of property and wealth generally.

But certainly it *is* against human nature silently to suffer poverty and

starvation; certainly it *is* against human nature to suffer slavery without protest or attempted rebellion; certainly it *is* against human nature to pass through life, bereft of happiness for oneself and one's loved ones, and like it; certainly it *is* against human nature to permit oneself to be shipped off like cattle to be slaughtered on the seas and in foreign lands without one's consent, and in a cause that at best offers one the lesser of two kinds of slavery! And since the mass of humanity under capitalism is offered precisely these things so contrary to human nature, does it not logically follow that capitalism is very much against human nature? The answer, in reason, must be that it does follow, just as it logically follows that Socialism is entirely compatible with human nature—Socialism which guarantees to all mankind a decent life, liberty for the individual conditioned only as life itself is conditioned by nature, and that happiness which flows from the enjoyment of life in abundance and liberty!

To sum up, it is not human nature that must be adjusted to an outworn social order, nor even to a new one, but rather it is the social order that must be, and eventually will be, adjusted to conform to human nature. “Human action can be modified to some extent, but human nature cannot be changed,” said the good and profoundly wise Abraham Lincoln, in his famous address delivered in 1860 at Cooper Union, New York City. Just as it is in the human nature of the slave to object to and rebel against slavery, so it is in the human nature of the slave-owner to resist the effort of the slave to free himself.

The right and wrong of it resolve themselves into the questions of ripeness of times and conditions, into ways and means; above all, they resolve themselves (other things being equal) into questions of *understanding* and *organization*—understanding of causes and forces at work (which is to say the mastering of social science); and organization of the forces of emancipation and of the enslaved class. As Lincoln so lucidly, so honestly and so beautifully put it in one of his famous replies to the smug little groundling, his rival for public office, Stephen Douglas:

“Slavery is founded in the selfishness of man's nature—opposition to it in his love of justice. These principles are an eternal antagonism, and when brought into collision so fiercely as slavery extension brings them, shocks and throes and convulsions must ceaselessly follow. Repeal . . . all compromises, repeal the Declaration of Independence, repeal all past history, you still cannot repeal human nature. It still will be the abundance of man's heart that slavery . . . is wrong, and out of the

abundance of his heart his mouth will continue to speak.” (October 16, 1854.)

It is one of the well-known phenomena of all ages that the most brilliant, the keenest thinkers frequently descend to a degree of stupidity utterly incompatible with their knowledge and brain capacity. One of these is Herbert Spencer, who undeniably was endowed with one of the finest Nineteenth Century brains. In his stubborn, blind and utterly foolish opposition to Socialism (which he referred to as Communism, and which was quite proper so long as we do not confuse Marxian Communism or scientific Socialism with the base corruption known sometimes as Stalinism)—attacking Socialism, Herbert Spencer said:

“The machinery of Communism, like existing social machinery, has to be framed out of existing human nature; and the defects of existing human nature will generate in the one the same evils as in the other.”

What Spencer here stated has been repeated with less literary elegance, again and again, by every vulgar apologist for the capitalist system ever since Spencer’s day. It is generally considered the knock-out blow to Socialism. And yet, how utterly infantile the objection is! It is as if one would say to an industrialist who scraps an obsolete machine preparatory to putting in a new vastly improved machine:

“This new machine that you are planning to set up in your plant has been made, and is to be operated, by the same poor, weak and erring human beings who had made and operated the old machine. And the same defects that were found in the latter workers will be found in those who must erect and operate the new machine.”

To which we would reply by asking: “So what?!” The important point is that the new set-up is a great improvement over the old, and will eliminate the waste, loss of time, and other “evils” of the old machine. The human nature of it may be no better or no worse; the important thing is that in the one case human nature, so-called, will respond as readily, or as unwillingly as the case may be, as in the other, which is to say that human skill and human ingenuity will still be at work, but multiplied by all the factors of the new and vastly improved, or fundamentally changed, machine! Incredible as it seems, we must conclude that Herbert Spencer in effect says: “True, this old social ‘machine’ produced poverty, slavery, diseases, wars, superstitions. This new social machine is designed to eliminate all these.

Nevertheless, it will be the same old ‘human nature,’ with all its faults and weaknesses!” All we can say is: Give us the new, improved “social machinery,” and we are quite content to let old “human nature” worry along as it has done since time immemorial!

Also, we may take some comfort from the dictum formulated by a thinker infinitely greater, and in so many respects wiser than Spencer and his loyal echoes. It was the great Elizabethan, Sir Francis Bacon, who said: “The sovereign good of human nature is the quest of truth.” And Bacon knew a great deal about human nature, both as to its glory and its frailty, and he knew it objectively no less than subjectively! And, trusting to the sure instinct and prophetic insight of the true, the great poet, we may also take comfort from Wordsworth’s meaningful lines which I borrow from his “Happy Warrior”:

“Turning necessity to glorious gain,
This being our human nature’s highest dower.”

5.

The “Socialism is against Human Nature” cliché is usually brought out by the avowed apologist of capitalist interests, or by the direct beneficiary, or “pensioner,” of capitalism, to use Marx’s biting phrase. Occasionally the more serious commentator will slip on this vulgarity-banana-peel, but it is rare that one who still considers himself a Socialist, and boasts of his familiarity with Marxism, dares to use the ancient chestnut. When we find one who does so we know that we are dealing with a renegade of peculiarly low and despicable caliber. And we have such a specimen in the notorious Max Eastman, of whom it has been my unpleasant duty to speak to before. Some of you may remember that Mr. Eastman was placed under the S.L.P. microscope about a year ago. In a series of articles that appeared in the WEEKLY PEOPLE in the spring of 1941, Mr. Eastman was placed on exhibition as an intellectual tap-dancer—or perhaps literary jitterbug would be more accurate. At any rate, the gentleman was thoroughly revealed as a falsifier and slanderer of Marx, and as a juggler of phrases, distorter of sense, and perverter or corrupter of Marxian science, he is quite without a peer.

Having dumped on the literary market tons of rubbish ostensibly analyzing Marx and Marxism, most of it in repetitious dullness and dreariness, the

enterprising fellow recently thought up a new one. Having fought several duels with sundry erstwhile business associates (that is, associates in the business of distorting Marx, and muddying the clear waters of Marxian science), he evidently thought it was time to settle down to real honest-to-goodness anti-Socialist propaganda. No doubt the decision was reached with an eye to fat prospects as a cultivator of the capitalist vineyard. To become editor of one of the rich plutocratic papers or magazines, with a steady income, and hunger banished for good and ever, would indeed be a proper, logical and altogether satisfactory wind-up to a career that leaves little for criticism on the score of having tried to the utmost to corrupt and disrupt the working class movement. Having tried everything in that way, having swung from extreme “left” to extreme “right,” and vice versa several times over, the time had no doubt arrived for putting the pendulum to a dead stop. And so we find him making his bid with an essay on “Socialism and Human Nature.”

The burden of the essay by the Herr Professor is, of course, that Socialism and human nature just won’t travel the same road! Mr. Eastman’s essay appeared recently in the journal of the Rooseveltian Social Democrats, *The New Leader* (Jan. 24, 31, 1942). But before that a slightly different version had appeared in the *Reader’s Digest* (June 1941) under the title “Socialism Doesn’t Jibe with Human Nature.” Mr. Eastman disavows responsibility for the title, implying that it misrepresents his thesis. The fact is that the *Reader’s Digest* title perfectly expresses the theme of Mr. Eastman’s “essay,” and by its colloquial twist even conveys the essential vulgarity of the author’s thinking. It is of interest to note the fact that the *Reader’s Digest* version (which is essentially the same as the one that appeared in *The New Leader*) earned the most unqualified praise of that distinguished and profound social scientist and original thinker, Wendell L. Willkie! Mr. Willkie places his *imprimatur*, so to speak, on Mr. Eastman’s masterpiece in the form of the following comment:

“Georges Clemenceau once said: ‘Not to be a socialist at 20 shows want of heart; to be one at 30 shows want of head.’ As a nation, we are young enough to care deeply about ‘liberty, justice and a chance at life for the wage workers,’ but surely we are mature enough to achieve this dream without turning over our destinies to a tyrannical state.

“Max Eastman’s statement of the case is the most thoughtful and arresting one I have ever read. I believe all who are concerned about the kind of world in which we are going to live after the war would do well to read it.”

It must be admitted that this is well-earned praise, that is, considering the source. We all know who Mr. Willkie is, and what he stands for, but there is an interesting fact about Mr. Willkie which perhaps is not so generally known. That fact is that the erstwhile utility man and corporation pleader is an ardent disciple of Carl Snyder, publicly avowing Mr. Snyder while campaigning in 1940—or rather, Mr. Snyder’s book, *Capitalism the Creator*, which is a sort of plutocratic bible, expressing the creed of the plutocracy in its rawest and most brutal manner. In this book Snyder expresses his contempt for the mass of the American people, that is to say, the working class, designating them as child-like, craving paternal rulers, and that they are still “essentially Neolithic in character and intelligence.”

It is, of course, no accident that the utility man and corporation lawyer who gave unstinted praise to the plutocratic servitor, Carl Snyder, should also recognize in Mr. Eastman a promising servitor of plutocratic capitalism. Mr. Willkie knows a good servant when he sees one!

However, let us review briefly Mr. Eastman’s opus on Socialism and human nature. There is not time now to take up every point, to comment on, or to answer or to refute every slander, lie or sneer uttered by Mr. Eastman about Marx and Marxism. I shall only try to highlight a few at this time and, if time permits it, we may finish the vivisection of the renegade some other time. And one thing more: It should be clearly understood that Mr. Eastman is no more to be taken seriously as a student of economics and sociology (to mention only these) than one takes seriously the stage magician and professional performer of tricks. It would be to err fatally to do so—it would, in fact, be equivalent to joining in maintaining the illusion that gentlemen of the Eastman type have any but a grossly materialistic interest in either upholding or attacking Marxism and the proletarian working class movement. They are dealers in literary green goods from beginning to end, and the more polemics they can start, the better for the literary green goods business. The Eastmans should adopt as their symbol a brace of fighting cats! As the saying goes, the more the cats fight, the more kittens there are! And Mr. Eastman for one is there to collect the kittens, skin ’em, and sell their skins as Persian lamb, or what have you! If “Geschaefts-Sozialismus,” to use the phrase coined by Frederick Engels, is good business, so is the “Geschaeft” of “anti-Sozialismus”! And if we speak of creatures such as Eastman in terms of undisguised contempt, it is because they have forfeited all claims to that respect and consideration to which the decent opponent is entitled, even the decent capitalist opponent with whom we are in

complete disagreement. The maxim of old English John Gay still holds good:

“Let’s not by outward show be cheated:
An ass must like an ass be treated.”

6.

In order to prove his thesis that Socialism and human nature don’t “jibe,” Eastman tries to establish the alleged failure of Marxian Socialism by demonstrating the bankruptcy of Utopian Socialism, and the corruption manifested in what, for simplicity’s sake, may be designated Nazi-Stalinism. He recounts briefly the attempt of Robert Owen to establish justice on earth by founding the “New Harmony” colony in Indiana, more than one hundred years ago. He has no difficulty, of course, in proving the venture a complete failure. (Incidentally, in his characteristic vulgar fashion, he refers to Robert Owen as a “benign English gentleman with shy eyes and a mighty nose and a great passion for apple dumplings.” It is impossible for Eastman to suppress the clown within himself.) He knows Owen’s attempt was a failure, because history says so, and if he understood the science of Marxism he would also know that it could never have resulted in anything but a failure. But what relevancy has this to Marxism? Ah! did not Owen call his scheme “Socialism”? And do not Marxists today call their plan for a new social order “Socialism”? Simple, isn’t it? The fact that the founders of Marxism at the start specifically repudiated the term “Socialism,” adopting that of “Communism,” precisely in order to dissociate themselves from Owenism (and “Utopian Socialism” generally) is craftily suppressed by our literary green-goods dealer. For he *must* prove that from the very “beginning” Socialism and human nature didn’t “jibe.” And this is how he works in his little card-sharper’s trick: Robert Owen returned to England, and, after he left New Harmony (says Eastman), “its thousand odd members fell to chiseling and snitching and indulging in rather more slander, if you can imagine it, than is usual. After two years they ‘divied’ up in a cool mood and quit.”

Now, could anything be more conclusive? Owenism (the very opposite of Marxism) failed, and base human nature asserted itself in the elegant manner described by the intellectual tap-dancer. Hence, Marxism is bound to fail, and that same base human nature will assert itself as it did in “New Harmony” when or as

society is organized and reconstituted on the Marxian principle. Q.E.D.!

Brazenly, corruptly, and with outrageous falsehood and flippancy, Eastman asserts that Owen's idea "gave birth to a whole litter of lesser ideas, variations on the main theme: syndicalist, communist, guild-socialist, social-revolutionist, Bolshevik, Menshevik, Fabian socialist, Christian socialist, I.W.W., anarchist." The bunching together of the foregoing as variations of the same "theme" can be explained only on the grounds of the man's complete ignorance, or of his utterly unscrupulous and unprincipled character. There is but one redeeming feature in the catalogue—he omitted specific mention of Marxian or Scientific Socialism, though, of course, he meant to imply Marxian Socialism in the terms "communist," "Bolshevik," "I.W.W.," etc.

Pursuing his corruptly false theme, Eastman continues: "Around the middle of the [19th] century, a gigantic intellectual genius by the name of Karl Marx undertook to prove that, although it had failed so dismally in Indiana, it was *inevitably coming true* throughout the world." This *is* thrilling! Anti-Marxism was tried in Indiana, and *although* it failed so dismally there, Marx undertook to prove that anti-Marxism (now mysteriously—surreptitiously—become Marxism!) would inevitably come true elsewhere!! This sort of mental mish-mash is generally referred to, politely, as a "non sequitur." Bluntly, but truthfully, let us designate it by its proper term: intellectual swindling!

Incidentally, Mr. Eastman (wallowing in would-be Freudian bogs) persists in his sneers at the personal characteristics of the men whose genius he is forced to acknowledge, though by his vulgar characterizations he seeks to cancel or obscure the acknowledgment. Because his attacks on, and misrepresentations of, Marx and Marxism resulted in counter-attacks, he whimpers that his "assailants" are out to bury him, and plaintively asking why they are "in such a hurry with my funeral," he replies to his own question: "The answer is obvious: I [Eastman] have committed sacrilege against a word—and incidentally a set of whiskers!" There it is, neatly summed up: The clown and jitterbug is being slapped on the wrist because he committed sacrilege against Marx's whiskers! We ought to be grateful to the well-fed jester, performing in capitalism's kingly hall, for this excellent bit of self-photography.

From Marx, and the falsifications of Marxian Science, Eastman goes on to Lenin who (according to the Eastman legend) religiously accepted the "Marxian system" without questioning "a syllable in that five-foot shelf of books." And

irrelevantly our literary circus performer tells us that “Lenin was in some ways more like Robert Owen than like Karl Marx.” Lenin was a bald-headed go-getter, we are told. He loved children and cats, but he did not like apple-dumplings, the incredible Max solemnly assures us! Marx apparently did not like children,³ and it is implied that he detested cats, but had a passion, too, for apple-dumplings! All of which tripe presumably is profoundly relevant to the theme of Scientific Socialism and human nature! Lenin was an able executive, says Eastman, which Marx impliedly was not. (Here we are to recall, no doubt, the slanders about Marx’s alleged improvidence, alleged neglect of his family, and his alleged sponging on his friend, Frederick Engels. For some mysterious reason Eastman does not explicitly make these foul charges against Marx, but it would have been more forthright, if not more decent, if he had done so rather than cunningly insinuated them.)

However, Lenin, too, is charged with attempting to introduce Owenism (which alternately appears in reference as Marxism), and what was the result? Why, the “New Harmony” manifestation of “human nature” all over again, only on a vastly larger scale! Ergo, “Socialism” once more proved unequal in the contest with “human nature”! However, as to “Socialism” in Russia, there are just a few relevant facts and factors which Eastman in his haste overlooked: First, though ideologically proceeding from Marxian premises, Socialism was not established in Russia by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Second, it is not established in Russia today. The reasons for these facts are many, but we cannot go into them at this time, partly because we haven’t the time, partly because they are not germane to our subject, and also because it has been done fully in available S.L.P. literature, The reasons, however, had nothing whatever to do with human nature, but they did have everything to do with essentials lacking to fulfill premises and promises of Marxism, with intrigue in a world dominated by capitalist principles, with corrupters, renegades and traitors a la Eastman, etc., etc.

But it is still essential to Eastman’s theme to link the failure of achieving

³ The charge that Marx did not like children is, of course, preposterous. The stories told by the elder Liebknecht (in his “Memoirs of Karl Marx”) refute this particular charge. But if anything else were needed to expose this charge as another slander, surely the following letter from Marx’s daughter, Laura Lafargue, written to the erstwhile Marx “biographer,” John Spargo, should prove conclusive:

“Karl Marx was the kindest, the best of fathers; there was nothing of the disciplinarian in him, nothing authoritative in his manner. He had the rich and generous nature, the warm and sunny disposition that the young appreciate: he was vehement, but I have never known him to be morose or sullen, and steeped in work and worry as he might be, he was always full of pleasantry with us children, always ready to amuse and be amused by us. He was our comrade and playfellow.”

Socialism in Russia to lack of what the tap-dancer calls “science,” and to cursed human nature. For without doing so he could not go on to the next step, which is that Hitlerism is the lineal descendant of Owenism, out of Marx, out of Lenin, out of Stalin. “I think,” says little Maxie, “that the word ‘Socialism,’ *in passing from Robert Owen’s kindly dream to Hitler’s ruthless tyranny*, pursued a course that, if we trace it carefully, can teach us something new.”

It would be too dreary to follow Eastman’s crooked trail, even if we had the time, but through the same mish-mash process of reasoning of which we took note before, he arrives at the point where, as he puts it, “the name [of Socialism] turns up on Hitler’s lips.”⁴ Irrelevantly he tells us that “Hitler did not set out to produce Socialism,” and since no one ever argued that he did, and since nothing remotely like Socialism exists in Germany today, the point of the observation is wholly obscure. But hold—Hitler did call his monstrosity “National Socialism,” did he not? Sure enough! And that, obviously, proves that Marxism is a “pseudoscience,” and Socialism a failure and wholly incompatible with human nature!

Eastman’s slanders and falsifications of Marx and Marxism called forth mild remonstrances and reproofs from the Social Democratic and Liberal brethren, but oddly enough (or was it so odd?), with but one exception among those who have come to my notice, they all agreed substantially with his criticism of Marxism, though protesting some of his final conclusions. There is no time to go into these, but this should be said: First, not one of them, including Eastman himself, attempts in the slightest degree to analyze and disprove Marx’s economic theories, and the principles and conclusions logically flowing from them. *Not by one syllable.*

⁴ Mr. Eastman either suppresses, or is ignorant of, the fact that the word “Socialism” “turned up on the lips” of reactionaries and social bandits long before Hitler. There were, in France, the “Radical Socialists,” who avowedly opposed Socialism, Marxian Socialism as well as the milk and water Social-Democratic “Socialism.” And what about the Ultramontane (Roman Catholic) “Christian Socialists” of central European countries? As early as 1911 Daniel De Leon (of whom the Eastmans are as wary as rats are of a baited trap, never mentioning this greatest Socialist since Marx)—De Leon pointed out that when the ruling class is sufficiently aroused, there will be no scruples about appropriating the name Socialism if to do so will further ruling class interests. De Leon mentioned specifically Theodore Roosevelt as one who unhesitatingly would tag his ultra-reactionary program or party “Socialist,” without, of course, adopting so much as a semblance of Socialist principles. Finally, has Mr. Eastman heard of the anti-Christ? The gentleman might also recall that when Constantine took over Christianity he ditched the original Christian principle and, mixing paganism with the militant program of St. Paul, turned the new creed to politico-imperialist purposes, retaining, however, the designation “Christian.” Assuming, for the purpose of illustration, the validity and practicability of the claims and avowed purposes of the primitive Christian church, who is to be blamed for the crimes and failures of Christianity—the betrayed or the betrayer? Let the Eastmans ponder this.

It is as if one would attempt to disprove Darwinism, not by analyzing and discussing the principles of biology involved, but by invoking the Bible, the Koran, or the Talmud!

Second, though Marx's prognoses have been fulfilled to an uncanny degree—technological development, concentration of industry, increasing displacement of labor by machinery, the disappearance of private property except for the few, the virtual wiping out of the so-called middle class, the international collapse of capitalism and its present violent destruction through the greatest war in all history, etc., etc.—despite all this, the Eastmans and their critics (who include specimens of the professorial lackeys of capitalism) have the brazen effrontery to insist that what Marx presciently forecast has not come to pass! It is the old story of the earth being round or flat all over again! Obviously, the earth is flat—anybody can see that who uses his eyes! Obviously, the sun rises and sets—who but a “doctrinaire” would argue otherwise!

7.

There is, as I said, no time to take up these would-be replies to Eastman's slanders and misrepresentations of Socialism, but I feel I must digress for a moment to touch on just one of these. Conceding one of Eastman's false contentions, this “professor” (in the jargon peculiar to his kind) charges, in effect, that Marx was all wrong, for instance, in predicting the elimination of the small independent farmer. “While Marx expected the technique of work to become universally collectivized,” he says, “. . . the individual type of work survives and revives in farming.” And the professor adds “learnedly”: “Agriculture, however, is the economic foundation on which the industrial superstructure rests. . . .!” And just in case we forget it, let us remind ourselves and the professor that soil, sun, air and rain are absolutely indispensable to the growing of crops! The professor concludes on this note of finality: “To talk of collectivizing the farmers is suicidal in any country where they are politically trained. But this again is Marxist talk.”

It is almost providential that at the very same time that we were treated to these samples of professorial owlshness, a book was being published which completely confirms Marx on agriculture, and as completely refutes the anti-Marxists, intellectual tap-dancers and professorial mountebanks alike. I refer to

Carey McWilliams's new book, *Ill Fares the Land*, a book every Socialist can read with profit. I want to quote briefly a few passages from Marx's *Capital*, and relate them to McWilliams's findings. Speaking of a rise in wages that took place in agricultural districts in England in the decade beginning 1849, Marx said:

“This was the result of an unusual exodus of the agricultural surplus-population caused by the demands of war, the vast extension of railroads, factories, mines, etc.”

Marx further said:

“As soon as capitalist production takes possession of agriculture, and in proportion to the extent to which it does so, the demand for an agricultural laboring population falls absolutely while the accumulation of the capital employed in agriculture advances. . . . Part of the agricultural population is therefore constantly on the point of passing over into urban or manufacturing proletariat. . . .”

Marx then adduces figures showing, as he puts it, “the decrease of the middle-class farmers,” due in the main to “artificial cultivation of green crops, introduction of mechanical manuring apparatus, new treatment of clay soils, increased use of mineral manures, employment of the steam engine, and of all kinds of new machinery . . . , etc., etc., while noting also the “growing wealth of the capitalist farmers.” In short, he shows the transformation of agriculture from small holdings to centralization and its operation as an industry, in no essential respect different from the transformation from small industry to mammoth, mechanized production.

Marshalling facts and figures, McWilliams proves overwhelmingly that what Marx eighty years ago pointed to as a process is now virtually a completed fact. He notes the fact, for instance, that medium-sized farms are decreasing in numbers. That is to say, the old-style independent farmer is passing out of the picture, while “the large-scale farms are increasing in number, size, and value of products produced.” And while recording that “the extremely small farms are increasing in number,” McWilliams adds that “the increase in the number of subsistence farms does not really represent an increase in ‘farms,’ but an increase in rural residences.” He observes (with reference to what he calls the “large-scale factory farm”) that “the profound changes which have occurred in the last fifty years in the economics of farm production have forced farmers to become business men.” “Modern technology,” he comments, “is changing the Corn Belt into a great factory district.”

McWilliams quotes an outstanding industrialist (N.R. Whitney of Procter & Gamble, a corporation operating a large farm in Ohio) as follows:

“Farming in America will become more and more a business and less a way of life. That this process has long been under way is evidenced by the fact that the percentage of our population in rural areas has steadily declined, and the size of the average farm has constantly increased. . . . In recent years there has been a marked growth in absentee ownership with increasing dependence on professional farm management. *This changing emphasis in farm ownership and management will be accentuated by the war since the demands for labor in industrial plants associated with and the preparation for war will draw labor from rural areas. . . .*

“The tendency toward farming as a business will also be promoted by the intense competition that will be faced after the war by our *agricultural industry*. This will necessitate a lowering of production costs through the operation of larger farm units, greater mechanization, and the use of fewer people and work animals, improvement in methods of farming, in seed selection, in animal breeding, in the use of fertilizers and in many other ways.”

I call your attention to the striking similarity between this statement and the passages I quoted before from Marx’s *Capital*. And with reference to labor, McWilliams observes that it “has become immobilized by a system of *industrial feudalism*. . . .” What Marx called “the nomad population,” McWilliams designates “the migratory population,” and for Marx’s “surplus population” McWilliams gives us the phrase “cast-off humanity.” And in language that Marx might have employed, Mr. McWilliams says: “The question is not whether we want the family-sized farm or the farm factory; it is not even a question of which is the more efficient. The question is: *What kind of society do we want?* For our economic order is a unity, with its own rules [economic laws of capitalism], its own logic, its own psychology.” And with final devastating routing of Marx’s critics (though, of course, he does not mention Marx in this connection), McWilliams presents the indictment and solution heretofore presented by Marx and Marxists:

“The findings of the La Follette Committee, of the Tolan Committee, of the Temporary National Economic Committee, all point to the conclusion that our industrial and economic order in all its phases—industrial, agricultural and financial—is not democratic. It is neither owned nor administered nor directed democratically. It functions in an autocratic manner. . . . *Its prime objective seems to be the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a constantly decreasing number of individuals.* It

breeds poverty and want, scarcity and insecurity, *not by accident*, but by necessity. *It can no more eliminate unemployment*, short of the emergency created by war (and then only temporarily), than an engine can run without fuel. *We need to refashion this economic order to a more democratic pattern by democratic means and for democratic objectives.*" (Italics mine.)

Thus are answered the tap-dancing Eastmans and the owlish professors, thus are upheld the scientific findings and conclusions of Marx, and thus, incidentally, are answered those who claim that capitalism alone is in keeping with human nature, those who claim that Socialism is, or will be, contrary to human nature. And let us emphasize the fact that this latest corroboration of Marx comes, not from Socialists, but from one who simply followed where facts pointed the road, objectively and honestly. Whenever and wherever this method is followed, we may be sure to find Marx and Marxism confirmed, and our faith in the common sense of human nature vindicated.

However, to get on with our theme:

8.

As was to be expected, Eastman makes no serious attempt to show why Socialism and human nature "don't jibe." The nearest he comes to it is in commenting on the remark imputed to Lenin at a meeting in Petrograd (now Leningrad) after the fall of the Kerensky government. Lenin is supposed then to have said: "We will now proceed to the construction of a socialist society." Max Eastman, in his usual flippant, irresponsible and impudent manner, adds:

"He said this as simply as though he were proposing to put up a new cow-barn or a modern hen-house. But in all his life he had never asked himself the equally simple question:

"How is this new-fangled contraption [the renegade means Socialist society] going to fit in with the natural tendencies of the animals it is made for?"

"The idea [Eastman continued] had never entered Lenin's head that men like other animals might have such tendencies. He actually knew less about this subject, after a hundred years, than Robert Owen did. Owen has described human nature, fairly well for an amateur [!], as 'a compound of animal propensities, intellectual faculties and moral qualities.' He had written it into the preamble of the Constitution of New Harmony that

‘Man’s character . . . is the result of his formation, his location, and of the circumstances within which he exists.’”

The presumptuous, posturing mountebank reveals himself thoroughly in these comments. By implication Max Eastman proclaims himself as one who is to be hailed as a great authority on human nature, on hereditary laws and environmental factors, not to mention psychology, history, economics and sociology—he whose every utterance testifies that he is an ignoramus on all these, a conceited poseur and a condescending, amateurish jack(ass) of all trades, and obviously master of none! This insufferable buffoon puffing himself up like the frog in the fable, really thinks that he is being universally and incontestably accepted as a greater and profounder genius than Owen, Marx and Lenin combined, when so palpably he is ready to burst like a bag of wind!

To cap the climax, he quotes Marx on human nature, not realizing that in so doing he completely refutes everything which in his intellectual infantilism he had previously presented as “science.” After delivering himself of this stupid misrepresentation of Marx—“He [Marx] dropped out man altogether, so far as he might present an obstacle to social change [!!!]” —Eastman quotes Marx as follows:

“Man is a complex of social relations. . . . The individual has no real existence outside the milieu in which he lives. . . . All history [Eastman further quotes Marx] is nothing but a continual transformation of human nature.”

With raised brows, pained expression, and oozing condescending pity, Eastman adds that that was all Marx ever said on that subject! And with customary effrontery he concludes by saying: “And Lenin, I repeat, said nothing!”

And so these poor geniuses failed—failed miserably because (in Eastman’s Greenwich Village jargon) “they had no science of human nature, and no place in their science [which had just been denounced as “pseudo-science”!] for the common sense knowledge of it.” They failed, in short, because mendacious Maxie wasn’t there to tell ’em!

And yet, after delivering himself of this senseless abracadabra, Eastman acknowledges that “Man is, to begin with, the most plastic and adaptable of animals. He truly can be changed by his environment, and even by himself [!], to a unique degree, and that makes *extreme* ideas of progress reasonable!” Now you see it, now you don’t! However, that unexpected bit of common sense is so hedged in

with *ifs*, *buts* and *ands*, and with “on the other hands,” etc., as to rob it of all relevancy and logic from the premises of the sage of Greenwich Village.

The final logic of Eastman’s droolings brings him right up in the front lines of ultra-reaction, of the very totalitarian gangsterism which he professes to abhor. His crude conceptions of what human nature is, and of the possibilities for progress with that human nature, brings him into the company of Mussolini and Hitler (and their intellectual kinsmen, typified by the late Teddy Roosevelt, for example), who hail war as indispensable to the moulding of character, and as an indispensable condition for social health. “Only war,” said Mussolini once, “carries all human energies to the height of tension and gives the seal of nobility to peoples who have the courage to confront it.”

Hitler has spoken in the same vein, and in similar, though veiled terms, Eastman speaks, but with less honesty, to which is added a good measure of sophistry. He insists that man has “an aggressive or pugnacious tendency,” which, he says, causes the “human animal,” whenever “frustrated in any of his impulses,” to develop “an impulse to lambaste somebody.” (Eastman might have added: “As, for instance, when Ernest Hemingway gave me the ‘Kayo’ a couple of years back!”). Having clearly indicated that he is not thinking merely of sporting contests, he says: “. . . We ought to recognize that contest forms a large part of what keeps mankind in health and interested.”

Apparently agreeing with Marx that “all history is a history of class struggles,” he deplores the idea of ending the class struggle for, says he, “the attempt at a classless society is an attempt to jump out of history”—in other words, no class struggles, no wars and no conflicts, and there won’t be any more history! If this is not good fascist doctrine, I should like to know what is! And the warming up of this primitive, reactionary hash, this Mussolinian doctrine of violence and brutality as the preserver of mankind’s health, the Socialist renegade condescendingly offers us as “the most important thing I know how to say about Socialism.” He sums up his reactionary imbecilities by saying that “the ideal society must be adapted to the unideal man,” which must “have regard to average native human traits,” among which traits, he concludes, “a gift for giving battle will be found quite as native as that gregarious kindness of which socialists like Owen [!] made so much.”

Earl Browder, on whose liberation from jail America’s (nay, the world’s!)

destiny reportedly hangs,⁵ once wrote an article in the *New Masses*, which he gave the self-revealing or confessing title: “Hitler Was a Clown Too.” Mr. Eastman might consider the market possibility for writing a book to be entitled: *Mussolini Was a Renegade Socialist and a Clown Too*.

Mr. Eastman possesses the kind of intellect and morals, supported by the requisite degree of apostacy and treason to his once professed ideals, which would qualify him to receive first consideration if the time should ever arrive when a United States industrial feudalism would stand in need of a sawdust Caesar. And in the unlikely event that his conscience should ever trouble him he will tap a few steps, jitterbug around a bit, and say: “Human nature, don’t you know, it is that cursed human nature in me.”

Parenthetically, I might mention that when Woodrow Wilson led this country into war twenty-five years ago, Max Eastman was one of the first to demonstrate the fluffy-brained character of the literary Fred Astaires by plunging headlong into the maelstrom of the war that was to save capitalism from destruction. “Swimming in the soup with the war crowd,” was the approximate way he ruefully put it after the war. That admission was made when he had become a Bolshevik, worshipping at the feet of Lenin, and when he acknowledged Daniel De Leon as “the strongest and truest theoretician” in the American Socialist movement. He has again demonstrated the same fluffy-headedness by repeating his performance of twenty-five years ago. *Then* he yammered that the Kaiser and Prussian militarism had to be destroyed! *Now* it is Hitler and Nazi militarism that must be destroyed! (Somehow capitalism, the cause of dictators, militarism and modern wars, always manages to appear as the maiden in distress to be rescued by these tap-dancing heroes, who are always there in a crisis!)

However, Eastman and his ilk now taunt the Marxists because we manifest no enthusiasm when offered the role of saviors of plutocratic imperialism which we are asked to accept as the satisfactory alternative to Nazi gangsterism. The Eastmans smugly assure us that it lies in human nature to choose the lesser of two evils. We have heard before about this “choosing the lesser of two evils” business. In every

⁵ The world’s destiny is safe—Mr. Browder is now out of jail supporting the cause, and the American President, so hysterically denounced and reviled by him when he entered the portals of the Atlanta bastille. Shorn of mustache (presumably to avoid being mistaken for Hitler, whom he still resembles in all essential respects) *patriotic* Browder commences his arduous battle against the *unpatriotic* Browder who retired from the world more than a year ago, cursing the present “noble allies” of Soviet Russia where Browder can thank his stars he is *not* at present!

election, you know, we are urged to vote for “the lesser of two evils,” and to elect Tweedledee who is such a noble friend of labor, and in every way so superior to “Wall Street’s” Tweedledum! I am here reminded of an old Danish proverb. *Varde* and *Ribe* are two ancient towns in Denmark. *Ribe* was known for its unusually severe justice. “‘Thank God that it wasn’t in Ribe,’ said the old woman, when told that her son was hanged in Varde!”

And so we insist that it is decidedly contrary to human nature to get oneself hanged, or to allow oneself to be enslaved, no matter whether the hanging or the enslavement is done by a fascist gorilla pretending to be a man, or by a “civilized” gentleman wearing silk hat and spats! The “human nature” racket does not fool us, even when served with literary mulligatawny or intellectual cream-puffs.

Yes, “human nature” (like patriotism and so-called “economic determinism”) is one of the last resorts of the scoundrel. But not really human nature, properly speaking, but human nature debased by a corrupt and corrupting private property and labor-exploiting society. Human nature itself, as I have said before, offers no problem to Socialism. Normal human nature resents all the artificial, repulsive and unjust factors which under capitalism, and other class rule societies, tend to debase and degrade it. On the other hand, normal human nature will respond to all the factors which under Socialism irresistibly will tend to ennoble and enlarge it—human nature will under Socialism respond to these as readily and naturally as the earth responds to the urge of springtime. It is the degrading and soul-crushing system of wage slavery that keeps the nobler impulses in human nature imprisoned or at bay. Relieved of its fetters, human nature will grow and expand, without otherwise changing in any of its basic essentials and characteristics. Therein lies, among others, the promise to the exploited workers (on whom the Eastmans subsist like the aphids on the rose); and therein lies the ultimate hope of humanity.

The immortal Declaration of Independence declares it to be the right of the people, and, indeed, their duty, “to alter or to abolish” any government that has become destructive of the securing to the people of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, “and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.” And suiting words to action, the fathers overthrew the then prevailing form of government, and instituted a new form—at that period the most advanced of all time, and embodying principles the fundamentals of which are imperishable as guides to action and as means of

effecting thoroughgoing changes in government and social structure.

The government instituted by the founding fathers was a political government because it was designed for a political society. Our society, however, has now ceased to be political except in superficial form. Our society today is industrial, and it requires an industrial form of government, or an industrial administration, in order to maintain freedom and order. Taking their cue from the Declaration of Independence, the industrially organized workers will—indeed, they *must* if they would be free men and women—lay the foundation of that industrial government in keeping with the facts flowing from an industrial society. In short, the promptings of their common human nature will compel the workers to institute that new government, the Socialist Industrial Union government, and effect for this present generation the corresponding basis of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which our forefathers effected in their generation, and for which they so nobly contended. The human nature of our sires did not stop them from ascending heights theretofore never scaled by man, nor from experimenting with forms of government up till then regarded as revolutionary and in defiance of all God- and man-made laws and institutions. *Because* of our very human nature these changes *must* and *will* be effected, now as in the past, lest that upon which our higher human nature is nurtured be utterly destroyed, thereby debasing that human nature, and reducing it to grossest animal nature. And, again, we repeat that there is nothing within the ken of man, nothing within his powers of conception, which so completely harmonizes with human nature as *Socialism, the Hope of Humanity!*

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In conclusion I should like to quote from the work of a modern writer, an author who has written penetratingly on the mind of man through the ages. The passage I am about to read is, in its wholesome conception and forward-looking attitude, in marked contrast to the mentally corrupt, decadent pleadings of the Eastmans who, incidentally and among other things, suffer from an “inversion of the perceptive faculties,” as old Horace Greeley would say.

“Nevertheless, the race has been reconditioned in the past, and it can and will be in the future. The only question is whether it will wait, as it always has, until driven by the whip of calamity or whether men will seize their Twentieth Century opportunity to use our new and clear

understanding of human nature for adjusting society accurately to man's characteristics and needs.”⁶

It is the task of the Socialist Labor Party to aid the workers in achieving understanding of their problems and needs, and to help the workers, united politically and industrially on the basis of their present-day class interests, to “seize their Twentieth Century opportunity,” and bring to full efflorescence and fruition the seeds of human dignity, human liberty, and human happiness—seeds that have germinated for ages, and which are now sprouting and budding. And we shall continue to do this while a spark of the light of reason and of the flames of liberty still remain—while hearts still pulsate, and hands remain capable of grasping and holding aloft the torch of truth and freedom. The night of war envelops us now, and our work of necessity suffers. And there will be worse to come. But we shall not falter. We may be restricted, delayed or even temporarily halted, but defeated never! As we gather inspiration from the immortal principles underlying our cause, and take renewed courage from mutual contacts in our common fellowship, we echo the words of Abraham Lincoln—words profoundly true and stirring:

“That our principles, however baffled or delayed, will finally triumph, I do not permit myself to doubt. Men will pass away—die, die politically and naturally; but the principle will live, and live forever.”

Present human nature, inspired by human nature of the past, reaches out to the future, certain that the day is at hand when conditions will be created under which can begin the process of so tempering and enlarging the human nature of tomorrow as to insure the so-called baser instincts being at all times kept subdued and subservient to the cause of the permanently higher, the infinitely finer and ultimately richer social life of man.

THE END.

⁶ *Mind Through the Ages*, by Martin Stevers.