

THE
BANK OF THE PEOPLE
MUST
REGENERATE THE WORLD

Transition from the Old Society to Socialism.

A PROLETARIAN
FRIEND OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
TO HIS BROTHERS IN LABOR

TO THE WEALTHY
IN THE INTEREST OF THOSE WHO SUFFER

TO THE UNFORTUNATE WORKERS
for the clarification of their rights and of their power

Vanquish capital through the calm of resignation.

A WORKING TRANSLATION BY SHAWN P. WILBUR

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PREFACE.

The author of this modest essay never aspired to the rank of a writer. What he offers to the working public is merely the conscientious reproduction of a study of society, forged in the crucible of a precocious but painful experience.

An enemy of hereditary privileges, a victim of the murderous oppression of capital, he learned firsthand, in sleepless nights and agonizing vigils, how powerless assiduous efforts and acquired ingenuity are today in the face of the obstacles with which usury surrounds the progress of the poor toward well-being.

However, avoiding all personal matters, he considers only the interests and the honor of the country; and, convinced that he is undertaking a patriotic mission, his goal is to propagate the principles of our social revolution, happy, as far as he is concerned, to find in anonymity the silence of oblivion.

CITIZENS,

The institution of the Bank of the People, whatever the enemies of its manager — privileged men, royalists and reactionaries of all stripes — may say, will soon become the most powerful organ for the emancipation of all the workers.

By emancipation, I mean the abolition of the usury that financiers levy on workers, farmers, industrials and merchants.

The socialist philosopher to whom we owe the Bank of the People understood that inevitably a tiny fraction of society, swelled by the deadly accumulation of interest, would soon enslave labor to its will and whims, condemning it to misery and the agony of hunger. Therefore, what this benevolent man dreams of is the triumph of the producer over the capitalist, the one who creates over the one who destroys — in short, the cure for the evil that gnaws at society: the oppression of the rich over the poor. The path is laid out for us; it is now up to us, the proletarians, to march resolutely toward the goal, to applaud the efforts of our liberator by giving him our support. And what is needed for that? Our signatures, and the smallest of sacrifices: fifty centimes a month. Well, is there a single one of us who cannot, by this title, become a shareholder? I don't think so.

I said sacrifice because the payments made to the Bank of the People do not yield interest, but also, we will ruin capital, we will destroy oppression: an immense compensation.

Yes, henceforth, all of you, workers, farmers, industrials, intelligence will suffice, and you will no longer have to count in your enterprises either the painful detritus of usury or the indemnities, tithes, bribes and fees of all kinds demanded by the pitiless lord capital for loans, leases, abandonment of clients, opening of credit, etc.

I leave these initial considerations to outline in a few lines the practical solution to the problem posed, and I address the first condition of man in society: to live through exchange.

All professions, in fact, exist specifically only by means of exchange, since man would be the most unhappy of beings if he had to provide for all the objects of his life's needs by creating them successively. It is therefore simpler that each person devotes themselves to a single branch of public utility and exchanges the fruits of their labor for other specialties, satisfying all their tastes and needs. This is what society understood from its inception.

The necessity of exchange recognized and defined, it remained to agree on the sign representing value. After successively assessing the disadvantages and advantages of this or that commodity, of this or that product, precious metals — gold, silver, copper — were accepted as terms of transaction because of their brilliance, their incorruptibility, their intrinsic value and the ease of their circulation.

Thus was accomplished the first advance of industrial civilization.

Later, as industry and commerce expanded greatly, and the volume of transactions continued to grow, precious metals themselves presented an obstacle to the ease and speed

of exchanges, and eventually, to their inadequacy. Hence, the creation of banks and paper money.

To the isolated individual, banknotes and coins are of equal insignificance. In society, the banknote replaces gold and silver; but its value is merely fictitious; it has nothing intrinsic about it.

However, this fictitious representation of value is based, in the State's banknote, on a real value: landed and movable property. Thus, no one has credit with the Bank of France, for example, unless it is clearly recognized that they own some property guaranteeing the remission granted to them. Now, from this agglomeration of property owners and capitalists, the pedestal of the Bank of France and other financial administrations, derives national prosperity and commercial activity, but also, at the whim of these sovereigns of the vault, crises, unrest, and misery, depending on whether their privileges are more or less respected by failing patriotism or by liberty jealous of its rights.

These petty kings, by the grace of money, cut, trim and prune at their leisure, by means of the consciences that they buy. They seduce authors and journalists at exorbitant prices — intellectual minds, no doubt, but without any real power when their eloquence turns to the highest bidder like a needle to the pole.

I return to the explanation of the material consequences of property, and I go back for a moment to its source.

Anyone familiar with history knows how the territory was divided after the era of barbarity: on one side, the cunning of the Druids, friends of royal power, spreading fanaticism and lies with abandon; on the other, a flock of ignorant slaves blindly obeying the whims of the arbitrary. Here, property was claimed by divine right; there, servitude and poverty, consequences of God's law, declared the imposters themselves, clad in stoles or crowns.

Thus, from the earliest generations to the present day, the territory unjustly seized by a small number of families was passed down from heir to heir, from descendant to descendant, under the protection of a lie inherent in the throne: divine right. As for the people, for this reason alone, they were always excluded from property: barbaric prejudice! By the law of God, it had to be acknowledged that the sovereignty of the race would forever prevail.

The fools! They had reckoned without the light.

However, amidst this immense anarchy of stupid laws, of absurd decrees born of royal madness that sullies our history, it is right to pay homage to private equity, in the respect preserved for the equal treatment of members of the same family with regard to inheritance rights.

The right of primogeniture was fortunately rejected and, in this, the legislation placed a calming influence in the midst of the social upheavals which, despite its resistance, would propel society along the path of progress to its perfection, that is to say, republican equality, an idea still misunderstood.

But, let us observe, this subdivision of property through the multiplication of heirs always stems from caste privilege, and this at least reveals the obvious injustice suffered by these unfortunate people — and we are talking about five-sixths of the population — who, born into poverty, live and die ignorant and wretched, bequeathing to their descendants the only property they are permitted to acquire: their share of physical labor — and even then, they have only the dubious right to exercise it, a right they cannot pass on!

I will not dwell on this last point; moreover, more skillful patriots than I have been energetic defenders of the worker in this regard.

Thus, society is divided into two families: the family of privilege and happiness, representing one-sixth of the population; and as for the five-sixths that we ignore, they are the suffering, the unfortunate, destined to play the role of Dante's victims. And let it be known, this includes not only the proletariat, but also small farmers, small industrialists, small shopkeepers — the very fertilizer of usurious plunder.

So, I say, while property, capital, industrial operations — while everything is invaded by the dictatorship of privilege, while financiers and landowners hold all the country's resources in their hands, they entrust it to labor, their slave, only under conditions that please them, conditions that are always crushing for the producer.

Fortunately for the serf, this feudal domination can only last as long as the light does not shine upon the worker's intelligence and open their eyes; For as soon as they are convinced of their rights and their strength, they will soon shake off the yoke of the financial tyrants, and here is the little argument that they will make:

“How can labor, for centuries, blindly obey the will of capital, when it holds the country in its power? Why it is labor that receives the law, when it could make it! Why is it labor that endures unemployment, misery, hunger, the agony of infirmity! Away with abuse and oppression! I, labor, will now command; for it is I who gives life and prosperity to the country; it is I who plows the furrow for the seed, who prepares and harvests, who spins, weaves and fashions clothes, who builds palaces, ennobles my homeland through the arts; without me, the nation would be nothing but steppes and ruins. Therefore, I want my share of the fruits of my labors. Today I demand an accounting of society, certain to discover in it incompetence and selfishness, since I often suffer the deprivations of poverty.

“Oh, all of you, producers, brothers, if we lack money, we hold the nation's wealth in our arms, our intellects, and this capital is more sovereign than the gold mines of California. Lacking the token of exchange possessed by the stupid financiers in their iron-clad underground vaults, we will have a token of trust established among us, we will have the circulation note of the Citizen Proudhon, we will have our bank, the Bank of the People, whose guarantee will rest on our products, on our solidarity, on our pact of alliance sworn by the faith of emancipation.

“And, be assured, brothers — and you wicked capitalists — that the Bank of the People will crush the Bank of France, as clearly as labor must govern the world, as surely as God will crush the head of the tempting serpent. For it is by divine will that ignorance disappears and truth springs forth.”

Well! I say this with profound conviction: The day when all the workers have analyzed the consequences of the Bank of the People, the day when all are fully aware of the extent of their power by accepting a medium of exchange free from usury and interest, monetizing both labor and intelligence, from that day, despite the annihilation of old capital, will begin the regeneration of France and the liberation of the world.

Crowned tyrants and lords of the vault, your squadrons will be powerless against the impetuous current of this grandiose idea. It will annihilate you all in a single breath as soon as truth clears the ground still strewn with retrograde thoughts: it marches on, it progresses, and soon your reign will expire.

The idea, by shattering scepters and overthrowing thrones, has accomplished only the first phase of the world's revolution: let it destroy the feudal system of money, and the rotation will be complete, and not a single point on Earth will remain deprived of the life-giving paths of humanity's sun.

To work, then, farmers, artisans, industrials, apostles of all productive professions; become the soldiers of your emancipation, study and reason through the great work of the democratic banker, and do not refuse your support to your patriotic friends who, braving slander and prejudice, go forth as scouts for the groaning poor, blazing the trail of the equality so often preached.

Selfishness has always said: Wealth is happiness. The philosopher says, with more reason and generosity: Happiness is the only true wealth in the world. Disdain the greed for gold, for you are rich, proletarians. You have the intelligence to direct your work, the arms to cultivate the fields and industry. What gnaws at you is a flaw in your organization, so let us destroy it. Do you believe that these greedy hordes are happy, driven by the lure of an ideal fortune, abandoning a land that nourished them, those who went to invade California for the sole purpose of acquiring a metal? There, there is no culture; one sees only a frenzied zeal to torment the rocks, to stir up a wild nature subsequently abandoned to the state of the steppes; thus, disease, misery and hunger decimate these countless battalions of the taxman every day. Well then! Does gold bring wealth and happiness?... Ah! Believe me, you possess the true treasure, for France is fertile and you are hardworking. I have uttered a great word, the word *regeneration*: believe me, citizens, that this is not an ambitious expression, echoing in the void of abstract ideas. Not at all. I hope to prove the legitimacy of the word by demonstrating the infallible results of the thought that created it. If you have followed me, you have seen that by establishing an institution superior to the Bank of France in the liberality of its purpose, the entire metamorphosis of the world must practically flow from the free availability of credit. Indeed, what is the greatest obstacle to consumption today, if not the miserable position imposed on consumers by the ravages of interest on capital, which continues to swell and grow in the same hands!

The greatest misfortune of the old society, of the decaying old world, is that it admitted the right of interest, that is to say, the relation of past labor to present labor, in which the only tool of production is the disinherited proletarian, who receives only an ever-decreasing wage.

So, what results from this abnormal state of society? Crises, unrest, revolutions and, if the current of social reform flows back to its source, beaten by reaction, general bankruptcy delivers the country's balance sheet into the hands of a few speculators, then feudalism is rebuilt upon its ruins. Is this, then, zealous conservatives, what you call order? For me, I can only recognize anarchy. Order? But if you want its true definition, open your eyes, look at nature, and you will see that all plants are equally lavished with dew. Well! Similarly, in humanity, all beings must have an equal share in the banquet of life.

I wish to explain in more detail the effect of the mechanism of speculation, which would make not only workers, but also manufacturers, industrials and the petty bourgeoisie, victims of usury perpetrated by the most powerful capitalists.

Indeed, all commerce, all industry, as everyone knows, possesses a great deal of paper and little or no money. Now, when confidence disappears, when credit falters, transactions suddenly have to be monetized, and consequently countless bankruptcies are declared. The arteries of circulation remain deprived of the cash flowing into the heart of speculation; then come the expropriations at reduced prices: double profit for finance, double loss for labor!

That's not all. Let's suppose for a moment that, thanks to the despotic order enforced by bayonets and sabers — a harbinger of a new storm for the clear-sighted, of lasting security for the blind — let's suppose, I say, that under the protection of cannon and grapeshot, business revives and trade resumes, after the ruin of half the industrials and merchants. Do you believe, misguided brothers, defenders of privilege, conservatives in short, that the capitalist will not want, as they say, to make up for lost time? For my part, I am convinced of it, and he will only sell his capital on more onerous terms; so that the social revolution of February, with the aim of relieving the needy among the people as well as the distress of commerce and industry, would have strengthened the feudalism of capital, the sovereignty of usurious finance.

However, I want to address all objections head-on, and I am willing to acknowledge, through a special law, the lender's inability to raise the interest rate above 6 percent. Good heavens! Aren't there a thousand ways, without violating this law, to convert into interest an infinite number of sacrifices made by the worker, which don't bear the technical name of usury? And on the other hand, even if we were to disregard the arbitrary nature of these agreements, wouldn't the result be, to the detriment of labor and to the advantage of capital, this immense yield of interest quadrupled during two or three years of general stagnation? Therefore, commerce, in order to pay this interest, stakes its future. Capital has always lived like a lord and, after enjoying the past, the present and the future belong to it. In short, however one analyzes the antecedents and consequences of the old social order, the outcome is always this: the producer enslaved and suffering, the rich idle and prospering at the former's expense.

Once again, friends of commerce and industry, by persisting in your conservative role, you chain yourselves to the glebe.

Let us examine the proletariat after the victory of capital over industry; it is more wretched than ever: no exports, or very few; for all foreign nationalities, aided by the progress of the arts, employ the resources of their territory for their own industry, and the Creator has distributed all natural products according to the needs of the inhabitants of each country: only the insatiable greed for gain disrupts the order of nature and disregards the will of the Almighty. I soon see in foreign speculations nothing but objects for the use of medical science and artistic whims: pitiful resources for feeding the capital that exploited foreign bourgeoisies!

Well then! While France is forced to content itself with its own consumer goods and the old social order, while proletarians and entrepreneurs are made miserable by the consequences of usury, while abundance exists in the smallest fraction of society and agony in the five-sixths, the imposing majority of producers and intellectuals, then, I say, such a society cannot escape imminent regeneration; and, I repeat: agricultural conservatives and manufacturers of goods and small businesses, you who wish to uphold the rights of inheritance and past speculations, do you then wish to prostitute the future to the past, to sacrifice the happiness of your children to generations of usury! No, you will not want that, and you will know how to distinguish, in the next elections, between the true representatives of an unhappy people and the apostles of disdainful castes; you will know how to separate the wheat from the chaff. Patriots, take heed, the peace of the country depends on this choice.

I often hear wise and moderate men say that anyone who wants to labor and set an example of good conduct will sooner or later achieve wealth, or at least secure their family's livelihood and their old age. What irony and derision! How many honest victims, left in ignorance, respond with groans to such a revelation of their fate, and how easy it is for the poor to struggle with the rich, who have taken over everything!

What! You grant wealth and education to one, you strike the other with misery and ignorance, and you expect these two diametrically opposed beings to march into the future with equal success! Madness! Come now, I want to plead your case while defending that of the unfortunate. Thus, I agree with you that we see some individuals who started at the pinnacle of wealth end their lives miserably, while others, born in poverty, achieve riches. Well! Does this mean, because of these rare examples, that society is well constituted?

Virtuous moralists, you always forget the complement of the dilemma: that the general rule of abuse remains the same, with one extraordinary exception in both respects. Indeed, it is generally as rare to encounter stupefying debauchery allied with education as it is to find fertile genius with ignorance. And don't forget that certain professions, lucrative fifty years ago, are condemned today to perish from starvation, even for those possessing greater talent for execution. Now, the more difficult positions are to attain, the more the privileged of high birth cling to them; so that, to legitimize your earlier comparison, one would have to admit an astonishing prodigy: the worker could enter the sanctuary of fortune, and the hereditary elite could escape it, relying on all the well-calculated resources of prodigality and misconduct. Is this then an argument by which the commercial bourgeoisie, whose interests

we socialists wish to serve, can defend the claims of its idle oppressors, the capitalists and usurers? I do not think so.

On the contrary, I affirm that commerce, industry, the working class, and the proletariat will soon form a single communion of brothers before the altar of emancipation: the Bank of the People. Brothers, we must recognize the altar of liberty and social emancipation in this noble undertaking: come, all of you, and swear your oath of allegiance to it.

Free credit, citizens, or the entirely legitimate abolition of interest — that is, the return on an inactive commodity — establishes the people on a completely different basis than the ground of selfish passions born of privilege. For then agriculture and industry, freed from oppression and enriched by all, produce cheaply for all: no more parasites, no more ragged poor worn down by misery, dying of hunger and weary of a painful existence.

One more step, and we are on the verge of socialism: a strange surprise for reactionaries to see this science flourish under the aegis of the law! Yes, it is with the Commercial Code in hand that Citizen Proudhon marches toward the destruction of the old feudal rights, and it was enough for him to found a limited partnership to practically demonstrate to the fools who called him a utopian that his projects were not the product of a delirious imagination.

Citizens, socialism no longer frightens even children or grandmothers, because the gentleness of its worship suits all souls, and whoever has generous sentiments feels drawn to its healing hearth.

To live by working is the workers' prayer; they must no longer implore. And you, dandies of opulence, resign yourselves from this day forward to adopting the habit of labor, for reason condemns the exploitation of man by man, and each will be a child of his own deeds. Those who wear the blouse have long devoted themselves to you, and yet, despite your disdain and ingratitude, the proletariat will love you and call you their brother!

I cannot avoid a definition of socialism, however brief, for two reasons:

First, to refute any royalist insinuation that accuses democracy of lacking either good faith or courage in professing its beliefs; second, to combat and change these repulsive ideas that systematic enemies propagate about our doctrine without understanding it.

Property.

Citizens, there are only two ways to express the truth: property exists only through labor; the true and legitimate proprietor is the one who directly exploits it.

This is how the definition of property presents itself to the mind of the socialist; but as a consequence of this same principle of logic, and for the sake of the chain of thought, it is fitting for him to reconcile the arbitrary with the right, in order to promote, without upheaval, without pain, without turmoil, the advent of society to the reign of justice. Two paths present themselves: one, peaceful, is the association of workers with the Bank of the People or similar associations; the other, violent, is the merciless current of passions, which, by force of circumstance, erects socialism upon the popular tide.

Men of peace, we condemn the latter and place all our sympathies in the legal system of free credit.

But let us take another retrospective look to convince the reader that the socialist is not stirring up the political atmosphere without motive, in an inconsequential, haphazard manner. Conservatives who preach the right of self-interest, do you know what position you are putting France in? Well! You are mathematically and inevitably making it an unhappy country, tainted by passions engendered by an excess of misery, which contrasts insultingly with extreme opulence. Indeed, I admit that France has a value of 100 billion, both in capital and in land and movable property; this 100 billion at 5%, average term, produces an annuity, an interest of 5 billion, which explains why, after twenty years, the capital will be doubled, that is to say, we will have had to, in this space of time, increase our exports by one hundred percent or double the resources of our territory, equally impossible results. For, on the one hand, the figure of our exports always roughly balances the figure of imports and, on the other hand, one cannot admit of two Frances in one after twenty years of industry and agriculture, especially since consumption must always absorb production when the people suffer neither hunger nor cold.

Now, what results from this law of property? It is inevitably that a struggle begins abroad, a terrible, deplorable, disastrous struggle: the country offers nothing more than an arena where people rush headlong against one another, where the strongest triumphs over the weakest, the most cunning over the most loyal, the most wicked over the most generous; That's not all: to add to the pain and grief, hatred, contempt, slander and prison come as infamous stigma to forever brand the honest man who, after fighting bravely, finally succumbs under the crushing burden of usury!

Oh! They were quite right, those protectors of the privileged class, to deny the right to work in order to guarantee the right to assistance; for soon, citizens, if courage and patriotism abandon the regenerative party, there will be nothing left in France but slavery and tyranny, the begging of the disinherited poor and the disdain of the rich who throw the surplus from their table to the destitute. Anyone among the people who refuses to grovel will die of hunger: a bloody challenge thrown down to the overwhelming majority of workers! I speak here without anger. I tell the truth. Do you want proof even more striking than the first of the absurdity of the interest of capital? Here it is: Let us admit that the fortune of the Jewish Rothschild, the largest capitalist in France, amounts to 2 billion. Since the banker, the ex-baron, does not disperse his treasure through unsuitable alliances, it is evident that, with the help of the Pythagorean table, we will recognize in an instant that all the wealth of the country must one day flow into his coffers, or be mortgaged in his name. Indeed, if 100 billion yields 5 billion per year, 2 billion, producing 50 times less, will take 50 times longer to reach the figure that represents the national wealth; therefore, 50 multiplied by 20 gives 1,000, that is to say, in the year 2849, France will be the property of the direct descendants of his Jewish majesty, the Lord of Rothschild. Note well that this cunning miser prefers to lend to the State, the infallible guarantor, since it controls the armed forces and makes the populace subservient to its will; at least, that's how the conservatives reason. Therefore, for this very reason, they would be ill-advised to ridicule my calculations about

the future by claiming that the royal financier is just as exposed as an honest merchant, given that the State could collapse. For then, I would tell them: one of two things will happen, either you will be the lackeys of Rothschild's descendants in your future generations or the State will go bankrupt by then. Now, the country's bankruptcy means the advent of socialism: yet another way to achieve it that you are revealing to us.

The great man who said half a century ago that within fifty years Europe would be either a republic or a Cossack state predicted not only the struggle of the common people against the hereditary system, but also of labor against capital. Liberty will not truly triumph until usury loses its unjust and inhumane prerogatives. Therefore, as prudent reformers, what we, preachers of fraternal association, implore is peace, peace at any price, the only way to make our doctrine of emancipation flourish in the light of enlightenment. The problem studied and solved, we want its application; it is above all there that utopia will disappear.

People of the workshop and the plains, artisans of all conditions, of assurance and resolve, one phrase, one single phrase — “I subscribe to the Bank of the People” — and you will have won the right to live by working.

Yes, whatever you may say, petty gentry and barons of accumulation, if millions of gentle workers were to utter these words of liberation with a single, gentle voice, the misfortunes that threaten us would vanish at once, a spotless horizon would succeed the stormy sky of selfish passions and the transformation of the world would occur peacefully, through the sole power of reason and abstraction, toward that model society, exempt from the parasitic principle of usury.

Unfortunately, stubborn resistance is being offered, and the slander of ignorance or hatred is everywhere building dikes across the current of thought: therein lies the danger, for the forced advent that we are rejecting, overturning the dikes, will occur with a crash upon ruins.

Conservatives, hear the voice of humanity crying out to you: Cease, oh! cease this ill-omened struggle! The poor have suffered long enough, and far from hindering the eradication of usury that deprives them of their livelihood, encourage free credit, protect the Bank of the People. Then you will enjoy your property and capital peacefully and without fear.

Do you believe, then, that the socialist has ever dreamed of the spontaneous and communal appropriation of what you possess? Never, never! Far from me, far from my brothers, are such ideas!

Inspired by the great people of February, probity is our most sacred law; therefore, we leave you your properties, we respect your titles; but, having proven to you that interest is impossible, even barbaric, we fight with all our energy, with all our soul, against this devastating scourge. We want, I say, the capitalist to live, no longer from the income of money, but from the expenditure of this capital, now justly unproductive, since money has neither arms, nor legs, nor intelligence to make itself fruitful. The same reasoning applies to landed property, which will be reimbursed at its value. Capital and landed property being

inseparably linked, forming but a single body, if, through the inevitable expansion of the Bank of the People, the revolution takes place in one, it will reach the other and be universal.

Ah! I would understand the hatred against socialism if we wanted to disinherit the owner of a field, a house, or any sum of money; therefore, we combat this unfortunate slander, and we repeat everywhere, in every place, that the enjoyment of well-being acquired today is a necessary transition from the old society to the reign of the Gospel. Yes, I would understand the anger with which we are pursued if we wanted, anticipating the work of time, to plunge these victims, once innocent, of the corruption, injustice and apathy of past centuries, from idle opulence into labor beyond their abilities and strength; if we wanted, finally, to impose upon them practical or theoretical examinations in which their evident incapacity would cover them with shame. No, no, never before has the true socialist wanted that. It would be cowardice, and we would no longer be among the great revolutionary people. Brothers, let us instead respond to evil with good, to oppression with resignation; this is the finest revenge. The rich man does not know how to use his faculties; well then, let him spend his wealth in idleness and prepare for his posterity the resources of talent and labor.

And let our enemies understand this well: by abolishing usury, we double the rich man's fortune, far from taking it away. Why? Because by deducting the enormous production of interest on all the objects of his consumption, everything will be given to him at half the price of its former value, and by the very fact that he will be able to live sixty years instead of thirty with the same sum, his wealth will be doubled. And, moreover, recognize in the abolition of interest an irrefutable power of logic. For no interest is suddenly wounded, no resource vanishes abruptly: thus, the wealthy capitalist who has taught his children to disdain useful things, while encouraging them in the pursuit of countless pleasurable superfluities, possesses, for them and for himself, more than enough means to withstand the transition without a single one of these privileged souls suffering the slightest deprivation, even in the pursuit of pleasure. As for the small rentier, having instilled in his son semi-working habits, he will still be able to help the young man until he can stand on his own two feet.

But, I will be told, you are going to advance into socialism without being troubled by the insurmountable obstacles of authority, and it would seem, from what you are saying, that the government is going to lend its support to the abolition of rent. Citizens, you are anticipating my thoughts, and I maintain that once the truth is revealed, which will soon be the case, with vigorous propaganda, general sympathies will so swell the democratic ranks that the majority of France will become socialist, and that finally universal suffrage, through this phosphorescent power of liberty and equality, will erect a socialist government, forever extinguishing the dissensions of all parties. The press, universal suffrage, these are our weapons; they can only be taken from us by destroying the Constitution; now, to violate the Constitution is to call the entire people to resistance, and this time we will not allow justice to expire on the bayonets of arbitrary power; we will not clash with those blind war machines called the soldiers of the government, for the year is still too fanatical to be ours.

No, not that kind of brutal resistance; but legal, loyal opposition: refusal to pay taxes; peace, more peace, always the strategy of peace.

Another presumptive question arises, to which I must reply. Very well, the conservatives will say; you are now at the pinnacle of power, by the voice of the people who have become socialist, if indeed that is the case; however, we suppose it is; but how will you manage to pay each landowner the appraised value of their fields, their buildings and their machinery? How will we do it? Oh, the last gasp of reaction! Truly, dear doctors of economic science, will you always forget that since creation, the truth, long, far too long ignored, has always proclaimed labor as the only real value in the universe! Well then! If we admit that man produces more than he consumes, especially when working thirteen or fourteen hours a day, as our feudal system has dictated since the earliest centuries, we must demonstrate the courage and resignation to maintain this abnormal situation for the benefit of the idle, until we have settled, one last time, property in the soil, freed from usury, with our profits. The current generation of punching bags may not benefit much from emancipation, but we will have the consolation, at the end of our days, of having secured it for our children.

There are circumstances, citizens, when expropriation becomes a sacred duty for the State. Good heavens, when we buy a park, a forest, a building that cuts across a railway line, all for reasons of public utility, I certainly don't know why we would hesitate to expropriate those who resist and obstruct the path of progress, happiness and, ultimately, the path of humanity.

Here stands a marvelous parody of a certain retrograde newspaper, a tirade I read, I no longer remember where or when, but here is its gist:

Look at what these wise reformers propose, with their hollow ideas of improvements: they want all dwellings to become the common property of society, so that jealousies, rivalries, variations or even sympathies of taste will turn all cities, all towns, into a dreadful jumble of incredible disorder, where no inhabitant will ever be content or at peace, because, since rights are equal for all, people will cry injustice if one individual lives in a palace while his neighbor sleeps in a thatched cottage. Or else, it will be necessary to rebuild all of France with standardized dwellings to obtain tranquility.

Thus spoke this journalist; he criticized, he parodied; but what good would it do to bother finding a correction? When one tears things apart out of partisanship, teaching the remedy for the evil, even for the benefit of the general welfare, would be to fail in one's commitment, to betray one's faith as a bribed writer. Well then! Despite this ill will, we are forced to remove the obstacle, and we will, for example, formulate a small decree thus conceived:

After the purchase by the State, in the name of the people, of all residential buildings, the former owners will each retain ownership of their property, but will only be able to rent to citizens of their choosing at prices based solely on the estimated cost of repairs, which I believe will amount to about half of one percent of the value.

As for factories, farms or any buildings pertaining to agricultural or industrial operations, this falls under the purview of the labor department, which will be discussed in that chapter.

It must therefore be admitted that all the objections raised against us are unfounded; for after having thoroughly studied and examined the question of socialism from every angle, reaction can accuse us of only one crime: wanting to unravel the chaos in which the weaknesses and passions of humanity have been swirling, clashing and fragmenting since the dawn of time. But try as you might! We will resolutely persevere in our task, disdaining both the slander of prejudice and, if necessary, the prison bars.

Now that the transition has been explained and discussed from all angles, I will address and define the other chapters of socialism as if it were already in operation.

A terrible and fruitful truth! For the old world, it is a volcano spewing destructive lava; for the new era, it is a beacon shining upon poverty, guiding it, filling it with fervor and hope. However, since socialism allows everyone to labor, the word *property* changes its definition and, when applied collectively to everyone, removes it from anyone individually. Or, if you prefer, each person owns their labor, their productive capacities and the element upon which they exercise these capacities remains with nature, with society as a whole.

Education

As the basis of equality, I first advocate free education for all, compulsory for the basics of science and political economy, and optional for higher levels.

Nature is more or less favorable to intellectual capacities; consequently, students endowed with greater aptitude will, with no other stimulus than the allure of knowledge, pursue their studies further than those with naturally sluggish minds, who, discouraged by the difficulty of the higher levels, will confine themselves to the basics. Here again, harmony exists.

Once the period of study is over, each citizen, by virtue of an examination, is declared fit to fulfill the profession that has inspired them most and for which they have worked most diligently.

Labor

By the word *labor*, I mean the application of one's physical and intellectual faculties in all branches of the productive world: agriculture, industry, science, the arts, administration, and so on. Are human needs, even tastes, so numerous that we cannot define and regularly manage each specialty? A socialist government will not fear these necessary, meticulous details, for it will eliminate countless other superfluous ones, beginning with all the petty plots and underhanded schemes of ambitious individuals aspiring to lucrative positions.

On this French soil, honor, which has always been the greatest talisman of celebrities, will have even greater power when the masses, currently ignorant, have been morally enlightened by a truly republican education, and when ambition, that foul fuel of honor, has

been replaced by the virtue of selflessness. Then we will disdain the question of material interests, we will accept equality wholeheartedly and each citizen will have no other zeal than to win the esteem of his fellow citizens. What is an insoluble problem for old prejudices becomes the simplest question in the world to the generous intelligence of the sincere socialist; thus, even in right, this equality of reward is more logical than one might think at first glance, and I will try to prove it by highlighting the injustice of the old law. The old formula of egoism, every man for himself, says that the man endowed with greater physical strength will be more rewarded than the man who is naturally weak and sickly. This, I say, is an injustice, since the weaker man, in order to produce less, exerts himself infinitely more effort than the more robust man in order to produce more. It is with intelligence as with physical condition; But it is above all in the clash of capital that the law of the strongest is most deadly and parasitic. If, therefore, the weak have always been prey to the strong, it is time to deliver society from anarchy and to accept equal pay as the normal condition of labor.

Oh! I immediately hear cries of abuse, laziness, and ill will. Vigilant Somaizes, you proceed according to the inspirations of the past, and through unfounded fear you cast a veil over the future whose dignity we wish to ensure. Times change: a good government will produce good citizens; loyalty in all ranks, therefore fewer lazy people, since they would be traitors to society, and no one wishing to incur such anathema, the balance of common efforts will naturally arise from fraternal union; vice has engendered vice, virtue will produce virtue. However, I will return to this in the chapter on the repression of abuses, in order to proceed more systematically within the socialist mechanism, and I will later admit laziness, debauchery, and even crime.

Since I have raised the question of honor, I must here condemn an improper meaning given to the word *honor* in the old language; for professions have never had a merit proportionate to their respective usefulness. Indeed, who has not bestowed more honor upon the banker than upon the proletarian, upon the useless lawyer than upon the indispensable shoemaker? Socialism is therefore also logical when it says: The most useful professions will be the most honorable.

The socialist sees in the repression of the whims of the individual only the aim of sparing them torment, and for this reason the government provides for the rational distribution of roles for all citizens in society. From this measure, necessary to prevent the confusion with which the past is tainted, true harmony will arise. Thus, I suppose that if a useful profession is abandoned in favor of a more agreeable one, or if the demand becomes too great, the State — I say, a very popular personification at the time — intervenes with its foresight in the interest of all. Let us note, after all, that the development of vocations was always in the past intimately linked to professions which, being more privileged, attracted more aspirants; an immense disorganization that socialism will not propagate. Besides, let this divine law arise, which I hope will not be long in coming, and we will have two hundred years to go before we feel the need for a thorough discernment in the classification of destinies.

What am I saying? Two hundred years! Much more, and the reason is that France governs the world. — Now, socialism in our homeland is universal socialism; then all nations will embrace us, and far from studying how not to be a burden to one another, all of Western Europe will be quite inadequate to wrest the vast regions of the universe from the chaos of barbarism. It will no longer be exile and treason to go far and wide to spread the benefits of enlightenment and the arts, since all of humanity, from pole to pole, will accept fraternity as the motto of sympathy and eternal union; finally, forty centuries will mathematically separate us from the scourge of civil war. O foolish men, who, dagger in hand and spear at the ready, stand prepared to tear each other apart for a scrap of land, a letter, a prejudice, what have you! Will you not make a truce to unite under the same democratic banner and march to conquer civilization in both hemispheres?

Before turning weapons against ourselves, must we not first wrest from the savage wilderness the possession and fertility of immense territories that harbor only barbarian hordes, steppes and ferocious beasts?

Until then, civil distinctions within an advanced civilization can be seen as nothing but horrible crimes: this is precisely what the socialist's humanity seeks to avoid.

How noble and generous would be these gigantic crusades organized for the liberation of the globe! Let the nation's patriotism be appealed to, and surely such glorious exploits will unite all hearts under the same flag and toward the same goal: the flag, citizens, can only be the banner of the democratic and social republic.

French people of all backgrounds, you will one day cherish socialism, and that day may not be far off; for popular intelligence is growing, and you will not want history to record in our country the infernal law of Malthus, sacrificing the child of the poor in its cradle to the pleasures of the rich!

That is enough of a digression; I return to the principle of organization: having admitted and demonstrated that, by right, all members of the workforce, whether in agriculture, industry, science, arts or administration, had the right to the same remuneration when they used their faculties to the best of their ability, it remains for me to define the management of labor in its various senses.

At the summit of the monarchy was an unaccountable and veiled power; Socialism does not want an inactive, neutral, disguised, talking role, no republican president, but an administrative agent at the head of each branch of labor, with subordinates, such as today's prefects, sub-prefects, etc.

Certainly, envy will never completely disappear from the earth; but when the various levels of administration are distinguished only by the attributes of talent and virtue, when a minister is the equal of a simple worker in the realm of material interests, then, I can affirm, the horrible scourge of jealousy and rival passions will have greatly diminished.

Knights of the monarchy, that this seems to you a dream, a utopia, is fine; but you will not prevent me from answering you, with a hundred thousand votes of the people against one vote of privilege, that, all things considered, a farmer is worth a minister. They have truly earned the gratitude of their country, haven't they, these clever legislators, puffed up

with their own grandeur, who, sweating and panting all year to produce a few ill-conceived bills, have finally plunged society into the throes of revolutions. It will now find the equilibrium that, with a little compassion, they would have given it without these painful transitions. Therefore, the people, henceforth guardians of rights through universal suffrage, will rightly attribute as much merit to the humblest labor as was once aptly bestowed upon the loftiest vanities of feudal or monarchical pride. In other words, this great sovereign wishes to inaugurate the reign of virtue and labor upon the ruins of the golden calf. In the era that is dawning, the greatest merit of a socialist minister will be a profound love for those he governs.

Taxation

From the foregoing, the nation is reduced to a vast, self-governing association; it calculates the ratio of production, deducts the costs, and since the profits are equally distributed among all, so too are the taxes that contribute to the costs borne equally by all workers. This is just, logical and rational.

Income

A man in full possession of his faculties produces more than he consumes: this surplus is called profit, then net profit after deducting the costs of labor. Such is the state of man in the prime of his life; but when old age comes, absorbing and extinguishing productive faculties, he would inevitably perish if he did not then recover, according to the calculations of Providence, the surplus of his youth. What a picture the past presents us, though! And how many unfortunate victims, after an irreproachable life, have gone to expire on the cots of inhumane hospitals. Thus, this is yet another scourge from which we will cure society; for, apart from the savings that the wise man will have kept for the comfort of old age, the State, from the workers' budget, will still provide every retired citizen with a uniform remuneration, sufficient for his subsistence. Retirement would take place at 60 years of age.

A very witty man, M. Félix Pyat, condemned this military domination of the State over society; he uttered the word tyranny! Profound error! First of all, whoever speaks of the will of the people, the will of all or of an immense majority, condemns the arbitrariness of tyranny, and if we never manage to obtain the sanction of this majority, when the light has come to light, we will be the first to condemn ourselves, since in the end the unfortunate would himself tell us: I want to remain a slave and sufferer. And besides, who could point to a single person living on earth who isn't dependent on some organization or other through which they provide for their existence? The worker is dependent on the master, the master is dependent on the merchant or the banker, and then in turn the merchant and the banker are dependent on the production of the industrial and the worker, and thus there is solidarity among all the people of a country. However, we socialists establish a great difference between the new regime and the old: in the latter, monstrous abuses exist; the strong oppress the weak, whereas in the former, the strong and the weak share equally in the results of the common good. So, if you speak of tyranny, it will be infinitely milder in

socialism than in the feudalism that has never ceased to exist. A rule is necessary in every society to prevent it from degenerating in this way; there has always been, for some, the license to idleness, slavery to labor for others; we need, I say, a moderating restraint from one excess to the other: we will all have our working days together, we will all have our holidays together, and instead of license on the one hand, slavery on the other, we will all have freedom: it is time to give this great word its true meaning.

Socialism does not Recognize Heredity

Indeed, if we accept the undeniably logical principle that man should only enjoy the fruits of his own labors, if at a certain age the good citizen has rightfully earned the happy rest of old age, why should he concern himself with the future that the State guarantees to his descendants? It would be incomprehensible. Furthermore, what immense sustenance this provides: no more avarice that undermines the body; but for all, the complete and ample satisfaction of needs and even the pleasures of life, and the physical strength of one's early years gradually regained.

Repression of Abuses and Crimes

The blatant utopia consists in admitting a social organization in which the encouragement of good, the contempt for and the punishment of evil are not mentioned. Anyone who seeks to discover divinity in humanity is a dangerous utopian, and I know of no such person. Man is weak by nature and consequently susceptible to the flaws of his tastes, his inclinations and the vices they engender. Education, it is true, will considerably change and improve the moral condition of the masses; but, however reluctantly, I must still acknowledge laziness, debauchery, and crime.

Laziness and debauchery, jealous of premature rest and enemies of work, will find their antidote in a decree conceived thus:

Whoever has genuinely incurred the contempt of his fellow citizens for laziness or debauchery during his productive career will have his retirement delayed by a number of years proportionate to his dishonor, and will also be listed as a fraud against virtue in a register specifically intended to collect these personifications of infamy. As for the criminal, he will be deported far from the social center, to a land of reprobation where the harshest labors will be imposed upon him to provide for his subsistence. Socialism, essentially merciful, abolishes the death penalty because it desires the rehabilitation of the guilty and, consequently, repentance for the crime.

Exile will have two degrees: the less rigorous will punish theft, prostitution, adultery, incorrigible idling and contagious debauchery. But if we repress with one hand, with the other we reward in the book of virtue and honor the good citizens who have deserved to be inscribed there.

The Political and Private Role of Woman

The scholar Buffon outlined the respective attributes of God's two creatures when he said: "Courage and strength belong to man; grace and beauty are the prerogative of women." It is indeed through the voice of this great naturalist that I will define the role of woman, as a consequence of the nature of her sex.

If courage and strength belong to man, nature has told him: "You will found and you will govern; power is your right, our laws derive from it." But woman, the complement to man's existence, lacking her share of command in the destinies of humanity, possesses other weapons for the defense of her authority. This authority is entirely one of prestige; it rests physically on grace and beauty, and morally on the springs of a soul more impressionable, more lively than that of man. If, therefore, we add to woman's moral power the authority of the law, woman alone would govern nations, and since this inherently poetic nature in woman would be constantly exposed to the vicissitudes of an overly sensitive, overly weak heart, we would suffer and she would suffer as well.

Thus, man's power, strengthened by law, is a necessary palliative to woman's seductive sovereign authority. A slave by law, she still governs through the irresistible faculties of her soul; a worthy and ample compensation.

From the constitution of man and woman, it also follows that each, in their private lives, finds the appropriate role for their physical and moral faculties: to man, arduous labors and lofty schemes; to woman, domestic care and charms. Consequently, no more groveling lackeys, no more prostituted wet nurses.

Marriage

True philosophy and nature condemn marriage, this lifelong bonding of two beings, whether well-matched or ill-matched; but living according to true philosophy and nature is beyond the power of human weakness; and here, as in many circumstances, extremes meet: alongside perfection, moral anarchy!

Marriage is therefore a necessary sacred bond, an indispensable coercion in society to curb the obscenity of abuse. Let us preserve it.

Religion.

In the eyes of the socialist, all of humanity's religion consists of the simple analysis of a practical philosophy.

Jesus Christ was neither the son of God nor the messenger of the Divine; he was a great philosopher, a great republican miraculously thrust into the midst of barbaric and fanatical populations. What did Jesus Christ tell us? To love humanity, to cherish virtue. He preached to us to forget the insults heaped upon us, to show charity to the suffering poor. Well then! What do we see in all this burlesque edifice of Catholic feudalism! On the first floor, great

lords resplendent in purple, drenched in gold, an insolent contrast to the simplicity of their master whom they insult! There they preach charity, and the people, burdened by their lust, groan with inability to pay their taxes. Bishops, archbishops and cardinals, impostor apostles of a revered name, you who speak on behalf of Jesus Christ, first imitate him in the austerity of his life, and we will believe you.

It is impossible to raise children without your religion, you say: error, aberration of privilege! And why not compose a catechism of maxims within the grasp of childhood, of simple and true principles? Hardly out of the swaddling clothes of early childhood, when a child can articulate a word, string a sentence together, accustom them to the name of the Creator; let them know a prayer invoking God's blessings, I agree; but I disapprove of the abstract, ridiculous ideas of your catechism. The purpose of the catechism is to guide the child toward good, but not to burden their imagination with mysteries that you yourselves call incomprehensible.

This, I believe, is how we should speak to children.

Q. Tell me, my child, whom should you cherish above all beings on earth?

A. God.

Q. What should you love most after God?

A. My father and my mother.

Q. And after them?

A. People and virtue.

Q. What is virtue?

A. Doing good.

Q. What is meant by doing good?

A. Doing for others what I would have them do for me.

Q. What is the reward for doing good?

A. The good gain the esteem of their fellow human beings, live happily and leave a beautiful memory after their death.

Q. What is doing evil?

A. It is doing to others what I would not have them do to me.

Q. What is the punishment for doing evil?

A. The evil incur the contempt of men, lead a miserable existence and leave a bad memory attached to their name, etc., etc.

Such is the nature of the reasoning I would like to see as the religious instruction of childhood: to make the definition of good and evil accessible to its understanding, to encourage it to do good, and to make it fear evil.

These, in my opinion, are the elementary definitions of socialism; I leave the precision of the details to the legislators of our doctrine: my aim was to express the principles. Now, I repeat, it would be a fantastic dream to claim to be able to spontaneously apply socialism; a transition is necessary.

So then, to those who ask me how the old society will be converted, I will answer:

Through the Bank of the People. Therein lies the means of scaling the old feudal fortress; therein lies the death sentence of all financial exploitation. It is the liberation of labor; it is the truth of the abolition of the exploitation of man by man.

Honor to the citizen Proudhon!

END.