

THE DUTY OF LABOR.

Some socialists, whose excellent intentions we greatly respect, have formulated their thoughts on the social question — more or less — as follows:

EVERY MAN HAS A RIGHT TO WORK.

Without failing to recognize the immediate material improvement such a law could bring to the lot of the poor, — at present, in a time when so many men lack even menial, arduous and repulsive labor to earn their daily bread, — we believe that the true interests and rights of the people, as well as the ideals of those who call themselves their friends, must extend far beyond this formula, which is undignified, insufficient, aristocratic and dangerous.

There would — perhaps — be bread for all able-bodied persons, but it would not constitute **SOCIAL JUSTICE**, the **RIGHT** for **ALL**.

*In fact, this formula is **UNDIGNIFIED**:*

— Because it is insolently ironic toward present-day society and humiliating for the worker, rather than solemn, majestic and powerful, as the expression of a general principle ought to be;

— Because it leads the poor to claim, *as a **RIGHT***, the eternal inheritance of *industrial serfdom* for their race, condemned forever to the forced labor of modern societies.

*It is **INSUFFICIENT**:*

— Because it is not universal; — because it is essentially temporary and provisional;

— Because, by its silence, it sanctions the ability of a privileged few not to *enjoy* this *right to work*, that is, not to work at all; — thereby failing to contribute to general production and effectively stealing from the people who produce for them — without consuming what these non-producers consume, and without enjoying the fair reciprocity of **GENUINE EXCHANGE** — a double loss for the industrious society.

ARISTOCRATIC:

— Because it irrevocably accepts, as a *fait accompli*, social inequality and the exploitation of the producer by the non-producer;

— Because it eternally grants social superiority to civilized idleness over labor;

— Because it divides human functions forever, unequally, regardless of vocations or aptitudes, and based on existing fortunes;

— Because it would be merely a *stopgap* for conservatives forced to do something, those who wish to limit themselves to declaring each day that something must be done, when in fact **EVERYTHING** remains to be done!

*Finally, **DANGEROUS**:*

— Because, at base, it naturally favors the interests of capitalists, proprietors, speculators and the privileged-conservative class, for whom it shows touching solicitude, more than those of the poor man who will labor for them;

– Because shrewd conservatives could take at their word the people who might ask for nothing more than that specific **RIGHT**;

– Because it limits the worker's desires and rights to the bare necessities, to an animal existence;

– Because the poor man, brutalized and in despair, might content himself with it for a few more centuries;

– Because it can persuade him, – *aided by Christian political economy*, – that his natural and eternal plunderers are doing all that is humanly possible to rectify a fatal, necessary situation, which he suffers without any radical remedy being found for his suffering;

– Because it would thus delay, through a specious and easy generosity, through a furtive and hastily snatched concession, the day of universal justice;

– Because it would thereby deprive social reformers of the strength and support that a legitimate, hereditary discontent, long endured in tears, must bring to the holy cause, the cause of **ALL**;

– Because – thanks to the people's resignation – the extremity of the evil could no longer bring about – irresistibly and within a given time – the advent of the good;

– Because, in a word, it would rivet the proletariat's chains more firmly and consecrate its perpetual slavery under a new feudalism!

No, let us repeat it loudly: the **PRODUCER** has no half-rights; there is no *juste-milieu*, no middle ground between the just and the unjust;

He has no right to a humiliating *minimum*; – *he has a RIGHT to HIS ENTIRE PRODUCT, to the integrity of his right, or he has a right to NOTHING.*

He is either a man or a tool; either he steals the alms you give him, or else, in your society, he is robbed *of his product and of the exchange he was entitled to expect for that product*, in accordance with the *mathematical laws of solidarity* in production.

He is thus twice impoverished, twice despoiled, twice robbed by the non-producer, whatever the cause of that non-productivity – whether it be *voluntary* or *inevitable*.

As long as one man – under any pretext whatsoever: *government, property, capital, commerce* or *talent* – can arrogate to himself any right or benefit over another man's labor, there will be a rich man and a poor man in society; and **LABOR** will not be **ORGANIZED**, the functions being **HIERARCHIZED** and not **COORDINATED**.

We therefore adopt the following formula:

**EVERY MAN HAS A DUTY TO WORK, SO THAT ALL MAY HAVE
A RIGHT TO THE FRUITS OF LABOR.**