

Daniel De Leon
***James Madison and Karl Marx:
a Contrast and a Similarity***
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Preface

The two articles from the pen of Daniel De Leon, presented in this pamphlet, at first blush seem to deal with subject matters as far apart as the poles. James Madison and Karl Marx--how incongruous!--the average man is apt to think or feel when first confronted with the combination. Incongruity, however, will vanish when the reader dives into the subject matter itself. It will be seen that James Madison, long before Marx, clearly foresaw how the institution of private property under the interaction of cause and effect would move along a line of development that was bound to produce profound changes in the economic status of the population of this country; that the time would come when these changes in full fruition would split that population into antagonistic opposites; that on the one side we would have a handful of holders and owners of large property, and on the other side there would be a large, an overwhelmingly large, mass of the population without property and without the opportunity and even the hope of ever acquiring any. AND SO IT HAS COME TO PASS.

Madison, having in mind only America and its future fate--the fate of the institutions he helped in building--and sorely perplexed by the contradictions he clearly saw ahead, sought the solution of these in the progressive adaptation of the laws and the institutions of the country to whatever social changes might

take place, a way out that is and needs must be, under the conditions that have grown up about us, blocked by the material interests of the ruling class, which these very conditions have called into being.

Marx, on the other hand, coming at a much later period when the outlines of capitalist society had developed with sufficient clearness to enable him to examine, analytically, the law of its existence and to formulate, theoretically, the laws that determine the trend of its future development--Marx did not and could not deal with the manifestations of that system in any one country; he could and did, in the very nature of things, deal with it only as a world-wide phenomenon, his conclusions being applicable to America as well as to any other spot on this globe where the social system of capitalism either is fully developed or where it is spreading its tentacles.

Madison and Marx--Marx and Madison--what a contrast and yet what similarity! What the one apprehends and foreshadows on a national scope, the other, at a later date, formulates and establishes scientifically on an international one.

The pamphlet is timely. It is more than timely, for we in our day see how the ruling class of the country, fatedly driven by the law of its existence, unable and unwilling to "adapt the laws and institutions of the country to whatever social changes might take place" seeks to set aside and nullify, not only the historic traditions of the country, but the very institutions and constitutional guarantees framed by the Revolutionary Fathers to safeguard the future development of the Nation. And, worse yet, in a mood half scared and half desperate, as is the mood of every criminal, and evidently despairing of being able to square its future aims with the country's political institutions, that ruling class is now seen to attack the very foundation upon which these institutions and constitutional guarantees were

based by the Founders of the Nation--REPRESENTATIVE
GOVERNMENT.

In the light of present events and of events yet to come, this
pamphlet deserves and should find a host of attentive readers.

HENRY KUHN. Brooklyn, March 1920.

JAMES MADISON

The Voice of Madison

(From "The Nationalist," August, 1889.)

"We are free today substantially, but the day will come when our Republic will be an impossibility. It will be an impossibility because wealth will be concentrated in the hands of a few. A republic can not stand upon bayonets, and when that day comes, when the wealth of the nation will be in the hands of a few, then we must rely upon the wisdom of the best elements in the country to readjust the laws of the nation to the changed conditions."

--James Madison

The wrongs on which the social movement in this country has fixed attention have finally, thanks to unremitting agitation, become matters of such undisputed authenticity, that there is now a perceptible diminution of the refutations once attempted by those who, with book and candle, were, and to a certain extent still are, wont to formulate alleged scientific dicta in opposition to glaring facts. This sort of argument is now yielding to another which, in legal parlance, may be termed of confession and avoidance. It consists in admitting the ills complained of, but denying their connection with anything inherent in our economic system, and attributing them in some unexplained way to a departure from the wholesome lines originally laid down by the Revolutionary Fathers. The centennial sermon of Bishop Potter is the latest, most notable, and curious instance of this new departure. Accordingly, exhortations to return to old-time

ways are becoming no uncommon thing; and, in proportion as this sort of declamation approaches the level of 4th of July orations, we find it festooned with flowery phrases on the fertility of our soil, with encomiums on the radical political advantages enjoyed by the inhabitants of this over those of any other country, and with random quotations from the Revolutionary Fathers intended to show that they considered the principles established by them sufficient to insure to American industry the rewards of its labor, and to free the American people from the afflictions and problems that disturb the happiness of others.

A study of the works left to us by the Revolutionary Fathers reveals, however, that they were not the visionary beings their well-meaning admirers should make them, but indeed the giant intellects Pitt pronounced them to be. Peculiarly interesting among these statesmen on the social conditions of their days, and the future problems with which they thought the people would come to be confronted, was James Madison, whom to study is to revere. Madison was no hireling scribbler, catering to a self-seeking constituency; no sycophantic pedagogue talking for place or pelf. He was an honest, as well as earnest and profound thinker, peering deep into the future in order to foresee his country's trials and, if possible, smooth her path. Let us then enrich the discussion with the learning of this distinguished Revolutionary Father, and give ear to the voice of Madison.

The question of the suffrage was one to which Madison justly attached critical importance. He understood it to be the point where political and economic conditions meet and react one upon the other. With pains, himself and his

contemporary statesmen had devised our present duplex system of small and large constituencies intended to be a check on popular impulses, and, at the same time, a concession to republican instincts. This system met with Madison's approval. His reliance on its efficacy was, however, grounded upon the actual distribution of property in the United States, and the universal hope of acquiring it. Even as late as the year 1829, a majority of the people in the United States were property-holders or the heirs of and aspirants of property. Those conditions, Madison argued, lay at the root of, inspired, and nurtured among the people a sentiment of sympathy with the rights of property. Again and again he declared that sentiment essential to the stability of a republican government. And he pointed with gratification to that social and economic peculiarity as among the happiest contrasts in the situation of the new-born states to that of the Old World, where no anticipated change in that respect could generally inspire a like sentiment of sympathy with the rights of property. But would the principles established by the revolution insure the permanence of that happy contrast?--and Madison's face grew overcast with apprehension as, searching the answer, his thoughts traveled whither economic and historic reasoning pointed the way.

Madison accepted the natural law touching the capacity of the earth to yield, under a civilized cultivation, subsistence for a large surplus of consumers beyond those who own the soil, or other equivalent property; he realized the great lengths to which improvements in agriculture, and other labor-saving arts were tending, and measured their effect upon the production of wealth; the laws of increasing population with the increasing productivity of labor were

no secret to him; he succumbed to no hallucination on the score of the freedom of our political institutions; and, finally, gauging the effect of the individual system of production, or competitive struggle for existence, he drew from these combined premises, and declared the conclusions, that the class of the propertiless in the United States would increase from generation to generation; that, from being a minority, it would eventually swell into a majority; that it would be reduced to lower and lower wages affording the bare necessities of life; and that, thus gradually sinking in the scale of happiness and well-being, the large majority of the people of this country would finally touch the point where they would be, not only without property, but without even the hope of acquiring it. It should be noted that in this reasoning Madison altogether leaves out of his calculation the additional cause of immigration. With this cause, a cause to which our so-called statisticians love to turn with predilection, Madison justly arrives at the conclusion upon which the present social movement rests and from which it starts.

It was then no immutable state of happiness, but a steady progress towards poverty that this eminent Revolutionary Farther, for one, foresaw and foretold as the inevitable sequel of the forces at work under the economic system that lay at the foundation of the country. All the causes he enumerates as productive, by their combined agencies, of a majority of hopeless poor have been at work among us with an intensity beyond his forecast. The pitiable stage when the masses of the people would be, not only without property, but without even the hope of acquiring it, Madison calculated would be reached by the United States before the nation numbered a population greater than that

of England and France. Our population is now double that of either; and Madison's gloomy prophecy is, accordingly, realized by us in its deepest colors. Our property holders have become an actual, ever decreasing minority; the propertiless are today the overwhelming majority; the wages of these have declined until they afford the bare means for a pinched subsistence; chance or intrigue, cautious crime or toadying, may, but no degree of honest toil can any longer, under the prevailing system, insure property or the just rewards of their labor to the myriad wealth-producing workers with brain or brawn; the few among them, with whom the spark of hope still glimmers, hold to a straw that must soon disabuse them; with most, all hope in this direction is totally extinct; starvation, plus work, is creating by the thousands the genus "tramp," which prefers starvation minus work; and, as the certain consequence of grinding poverty and its concomitant--extravagant wealth--immorality, as well as corruption, is rampant among the people, and breaks out in the government. Not, then, by reason of any degeneration, not by reason of any departure from, but closely adhering to the lines laid down by the Revolutionary Fathers, have the people reached the present shocking state against which the Nationalist movement is enlisted. The vulnerable point was the competitive system of production which the American revolution left extant. The present conditions are its logical result. It does not necessarily follow from this that a blunder was committed by the Revolutionary Fathers. History seems to show that the competitive stage is a requisite stage in the evolution of society. But whether this be so or not, today the competitive system is only productive of mischief.

On a notable occasion, John Adams, another Revolutionary Father, had uttered the sentence, that where the working poor were paid in return for their labor only as much money as would buy them the necessaries of life, their condition was identical with that of the slave, who received those necessaries at short hand; the former might be called "freemen," the latter "slaves," but the difference was imaginary only. Madison grasped the bearing of this profound thought in all its fulness. As his own reasoning revealed to him the eventual destitution of the masses, the conclusion was self-evident that their condition would become virtually that of slavery. A minority of slaves might be kept under; but a large majority--and that made up of the races to which the world owes its progress--Madison realized would not long submit to the galling yoke. Accordingly, he descried in the not distant future a serious conflict between the class with and the class without property; the fated collapse of the system of suffrage he had helped to rear; and, consequently, the distinct outlines of a grave national problem.

The solution of this problem, which presented itself to Madison in the guise of a question of suffrage, involved, however, the economic question: What should be done with that unfavored class, who, toiling in hopeless poverty,--slaves in fact, if not in name--would constitute the majority of the body social? This question Madison proposed, but vainly labored to find in the various methods of checks and balances an answer that was either adequate to the threatened emergency, or satisfactory to his judgment. To exclude the class without property from the right of suffrage he promptly rejected, as no republican

government could be expected to endure that rested upon a portion of the society having a numerical and physical force excluded from and liable to be turned against it, unless kept down by a standing military force fatal to all parties. To confine the right of suffrage for one branch of the legislature to those with, and for the other branch to those without property, he likewise set aside as a regulation calculated to lay the foundation for contests and antipathies not dissimilar to those between the patricians and plebeians at Rome. And again, he shrewdly detected dangers lurking in a mixture of the two classes in both branches.

Thus the question of the suffrage brought Madison unconsciously face to face with the social question. His talent saved him from falling into a reactionary plan, or even resorting to a temporary make-shift; but likewise did the limitations of his age prevent him from hitting upon the scheme which alone could solve both the problem that preoccupied him, and the graver one into which his spirit had projected. He gave the matter over; but not without first bestowing upon it a parting flash of genius by the significant avowal that the impending social changes would necessitate a proportionate change in the institutions and laws of the country, and would bespeak all the wisdom of the wisest patriot.

Karl Marx stops in the midst of his analysis of the law of values to render tribute to the genius of Aristotle for discovering in the expression of the value of commodities the central truth of political economy, which only the peculiar system of society in which he lived prevented him from accepting and carrying to its logical conclusion. How

much more brilliant and deserving of tribute the genius of Madison that enabled him to take so long a look ahead; calculate with such nicety the results of political and economic forces; foresee with such accuracy the great coming problem of our country, and state it with such clearness; weigh with such breadth of judgment the methods known to him in order to meet and solve it, and discard them one after the other with so much acumen; rise to such height of statesmanship by boldly declaring the problem could be dealt with in no way other than by adapting the laws and institutions of the country to the social changes that may take place; and, finally, commend the task to, and invoke for its performance, the wisdom of the future patriot!

That the wisdom of the Revolutionary Fathers and their teachings are not lost upon their successors, the appearance and growth of the Nationalist movement demonstrate. The voice of Madison has reached our generation. The patriots in the revolution now impending and equally important with that of a hundred years ago will be on hand.

KARL MARX

(Daily People, May 4, 1913.)

"In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society--the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or--what is but a legal expression for the same thing--with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution."

--Karl Marx

Above the dust raised by the recent speeches of Vice-President Marshall, the answers attempted by his critics, his replies, rejoinders and surrejoinders on the subject of "the rich"--above that thick dust there rises, majestic, the giant intellectual figure of Karl Marx--above the confused controversy there is heard, clear as a bell, the scientific note of Marxism.

The Labor Movement, or, be it, the Social Question, is not a phenomenon of date as recent in America as it would seem. It arose about ninety years ago. Nevertheless, first the war with Mexico and thereby the opening of further and vast natural opportunities; thereupon the discovery of gold in California; the Civil War in the Sixties; the subsequent acquisition of the Hawaiian Islands; the speedily following discovery of gold in Alaska; then the war with Spain and the consequent annexation of Porto Rico on the Atlantic and of the broader acres of the Philippines on the Pacific; last but not least, the Canal venture on the Isthmus--these, not to mention minor intermediary incidents, were the forces of varying power, recurring at intervals of varying length, that successively "laid on the table" the motion of the Social Question which was first made in the Twenties of the last century. To be sure, each successive time the motion was supposed to be permanently "tabled," yet was it as regularly and persistently again "taken from the table" at each successively recurring interval--taken from the table with an ever increasing "vote" in the affirmative, until now the slimness of the "vote" in the negative may be gauged by the insignificance of the only two States carried last November by Mr. Taft. Today the motion is now in permanence "before the house"; it is the only motion.

Epoch-marking in the discussion was the book of Edward Bellamy, "Looking Backward"--a curious work on social science, seeing its teachings were threaded with a love story; a unique romance, seeing, it was essentially sociologic. Down to the Nationalist Movement, to which "Looking Backward" gave the impulse in 1889, and since the days of Thomas Skidmore, which may be said to have

seen the tangible start of the Social Question, the motion presented by the same bore two characteristics--the distinct note of Revolution, and glaring crudity of thought. The Nationalist Movement was the connecting link between the crude, tho' Revolutionary Past, and the Revolutionary, but no longer crude, Present. The difference consisted in the Marxism that stamps the present.

From the older, hence more experienced civilization of Europe, the breath of Collectivism was breathed into the land. With the device "Proletarians of all countries, unite!", Collectivism itself had cast off the early Communistic vestiges with which it was at first clothed and Marxism made its appearance here as Socialism, as the compilation of the economic, ethnic and sociologic principles around which a vast Movement was crystallizing on the opposite shores of the Atlantic.

It goes without saying that the appearance of Marxism in America denoted a ripening of Social conditions away from the conditions known to the "Revolutionary Fathers." In the measure that Evolution was plowing the field for Revolution, and in the measure that Evolution was recruiting, even organizing, the forces for the Social Revolution, the Capitalist Class "threw up breastworks"--met the arguments of the approaching Revolution with counter-arguments. The crudities of the arguments of the pre-Marxian days furnished the counter-arguments with welcome handles. The "handles" grew fewer and fewer in the measure that Marxism "took possession." From year to year the clash narrowed down more and more to Marxism and anti-Marxism.

Today it is Marxism against "the field," or, "the field" against Marxism, the multitudinous anti-Marxist theories making common cause against Marxism.

Which is right; hence, to which belongs the future?

Altho' the dictum of John Stuart Mill--"Social science is not an exact science"--is more sweeping than the facts warrant, this much is true: Social science is not, like the exact sciences, subject to demonstration in advance. Is, then, man left wholly without guidance, condemned to flounder about in the wilderness, and by accident only to strike the path that leads out of the woods? Not at all--at least not our generation.

Altho' not directly demonstrable; like a proposition in Euclid, sociologic theories are more or less quickly amenable to a touch-stone that is the test of SCIENCE; What is the touch-stone? It is Prescience--the power to foresee. Not one of the sociologic theories advanced today but has lived long enough to be brought to the touch:--has it foreseen correctly?--has it not? If it has, it is scientific, and true; if it has not, it is nonsense and false. If it has foreseen correctly, then may it be safely banked upon as a cardinal a principle, like any mathematical theorem; if it has not foreseen correctly, then should it be discarded as a chimera.

Brought to the touch, is Marxism scientific?

Marxism is the sociologic tenet, which, synthetically combining ethnology and political economy, and,

proceeding from the theory of the Law of Value, established by itself, follows the law through its numerous ramifications, and arrived at the conclusion that the material goal of civilized existence is an abundance of wealth for all producible and produced without arduous toil by any; that the social structure requisite to reach the goal, is dictated by the progressive mechanism of wealth-production, that social structure being the Co-operative Commonwealth--a commonwealth which substitutes "political government," government by political agents, with "industrial government," government by the representatives of the organized useful industries of the Nation; and that broadening and deepening mass-pauperization, with the consequent enslavement to an ever more plethorically wealthy economic oligarchy, is the inevitable outcome of the continued private ownership of the natural and social requisite for production.

Thus does Marxism foresee and foretell.

How does anti-Marxism?

Anti-Marxism foretells that the social and political institutions raised by the Fathers will be forever; it maintains that they are the last word of socio-political evolution, and it surmounts the Constitution with the motto: "Esto perpetua"--so shall it be forevermore.

Anti-Marxism--unmindful of the warning of James Madison that the time would come when a majority of our people would be propertiless and without the hope of acquiring property--foretells that involuntary poverty is a phenomenon impossible under the Stars and Stripes.

Anti-Marxism, speaking through the mouth of the A. F. of L., asserts the present and foretells the continued "brotherly relations" between Capital and Labor.

Anti-Marxism, speaking through Protection, foretells prosperity from a high tariff and dear goods, profited from by Brother Labor and Brother Capital alike.

Anti-Marxism, speaking through Free Trade, foretells prosperity from a low tariff and cheap goods, a bountifulness to be shared in reciprocity by Both Labor and Brother Capital.

Anti-Marxism, speaking through Finance, foretells universal well-being, one day from a gold standard, another day from a silver standard, now from an "elastic currency."

Anti-Marxism, speaking through its ecclesiasticals, foretells peace on earth from "Godliness," and denounces as "un-Godly" the theorizers who maintain the existence of classes and class war.

Unnecessary to extend the list. Whatever the special complexion of the anti-Marxist, one basic feature all have in common, instinctively in common,--a veritable Free Masonry, all reject the Marxian Law of Value, along with its consequent theory of the unbridgeable, irreconcilable, and irrepressible Struggle of Classes, UPON THE REJECTION OF WHICH EACH PLANTS HIS SPECIAL, THEORY, speedily to see the prognostics drawn therefrom come to grief. They prove better things. With the regularity of clockwork worse has followed and is following, as illustrated, just now, by

the spasms of both Vice-President Marshall and all his bourgeois critics.

Events refute anti-Marxism, and demonstrate it the opposite of Science. From each recurring refutation of anti-Marxism, and demonstration of its unscientific foundation and spirit, Marxism itself rises re-confirmed; its scientific merits re-demonstrated; taller in inches, stronger of voice; with ever more ears catching its vibrant, clear note; ever more hearts warming and minds rescued from the Slough of Despond by the lofty sentiments its truths inspire; ever larger masses marshalling under its banner.

In the meantime, official economists, and other pensionaries of capitalism, writhing with the cold steel of Marxian science in the vitals of their theories, hide their rage in the wrinkle of a sneer at Marx.