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Contents

of trade union action with trade union theories, and by an accumulation of facts and examples prove that, even sometimes unconsciously, trade unions are inspired by these ideas.

They demonstrate that the application of these guiding ideas greatly influences present society, and that face to face with ancient organisms overtaken by old age, there are being developed germs of a new society in which human beings will evolve without hindrance in the midst of autonomous groups.

enters their heads to find in this a motive for recrimination or inaction.

The workers despise the narrowness and pettiness of middle class egoism, that under the cloak of individual expansion, breeds poverty and disease, and dries up the springs of life. Convinced that mutual aid in order to live is the precondition of all social progress, trade unionists identify their interests with the common interest. That is why when they do act, it is not in their own name, but in the name of the people whose destiny they shape. By further logic they do not limit their activity to their Association, but, stating general claims, they extend it to the whole of the working class. This, when they have wrung an improvement from capitalism, they expect all to benefit by it – all! Non-unionists! The unthinking, even scabs!

This feeling of broadminded fraternity, this profoundly human understanding of social harmony, raises trade unionism to a plane of excellence. Its superiority to democratic principles, which only breed shabby tricks, fratricidal struggles and social conflict, is unquestionable. Therefore, trade union right is the expression of the new, profoundly human right that rouses the conscience and opposes ancient dogmas by preparing social regeneration; a society in which the oppressive system of law will be replaced by a system of free contracts consented to by all parties concerned, improvable or revocable at will, in which capitalist production will give way to economic federation, brought about the cohesion of producing groups, whose members will assure to human beings the maximum of well-being and liberty.

Conclusion

It would be more to the point to say, "Introduction," In these articles I have endeavoured to define the ideas that guide trade unions. The most important is still to follow. It is to show the harmony

DEFINITION OF TRADE UNIONISM[1]

Of late the term "trade unionism" has a far more far-reaching meaning than it used to have. The term continues to qualify "members of a trade union organisation." Besides this nebulous and colourless definition, which, by stretching a point, might be a label for "Yellow" as well as for "Red" trade unions, the term has acquired a new and very precise meaning.

The term "trade unionism" has become a comprehensive term: the impulsive power of conscious workers towards progress. The workers who invoke this epithet have thrown aside unsound and deceptive notions, and are convinced that improvements, be they partial or extreme, can only result from popular force and will. On the ruins of their former sheeplike hopes and superstitious beliefs in miracles to be expected from State Providence as well as from Divine Providence, they have elaborated a healthy, truly human doctrine whose basis is explained and proved by social phenomena.

The trade unionist is evidently a partisan of grouping workers by means of trade unions, only he does not conceive a trade union as an agent for narrowing his vision to such a point that his sphere of action is restricted to daily debates and wrangles with his employers; and although at present he strives to get minor grievances redressed, he never puts aside the evils arising from the exploitation of the workers. Neither does he conceive the trade union to be, as some politicians do, an "elementary school of Socialism", where men are recruited and trained to be aggressive fighters in a cause they consider effective and worthwhile – the conquest of governmental power.

For the trade unionist, the trade union is a perfect combination answering to all needs, to all aspirations, and therefore sufficient for all purposes. It is an association conceived by "reformers" af-

[1] The French word "Syndicat" has been rendered into English as its nearest equivalent. The French organisations, however, differ from the English in inculcating a revolutionary spirit and ignoring political action.

fording opportunity for daily conflict with employers, for improvements, and for settling minor claims.

But it is not only this; it is a combination capable of bringing about the expropriation of capital and the reorganisation of society, which some Socialists, who are deceived by their confidence in the "State", believe will be brought about by the seizure of political power.

Therefore, for the trade unionist the trade union is not a transient association, only suited to the needs of the hour, and whose usefulness could not be conceived apart from its present surroundings. For him the trade union is an initial and essential combination; it should arise spontaneously, independently of all preconceived theories, and develop in any surroundings.

In fact, what more reasonable than for the exploited of the same trade to come together, to agree to unite in defence of common advantages that are to be gained immediately?

On the other hand, supposing society to have been annihilated and a Communist or any other society to have blossomed forth on its ruins, it is evident that in these circumstances, in these new surroundings, the need of associations, bringing men employed in identical or similar work and duties in contact with one another, will be most urgent.

Thus the trade union, the corporate body, appears to be the organic cell of all society. At present, for the trade unionist the trade union is an organism of conflict and claim of worker against employer. In the future it will be the base on which normal society will be built, when freed from exploitation and oppression.

THE WORKING CLASS BATTLES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The conception of the forerunners of trade unionism is not the result of a hypothetical system sprung from some brain and not

Trade union right is the exact opposite. Starting from individual sovereignty and the autonomy of human beings, it ends in agreement in order to live in solidarity, so that its logical, unquestionable consequence is the realisation of social liberty and equality.

Thus we can understand that by virtue of their individual sovereignty trade unionists have grown strong by coming into contact with other identical sovereignties; they do not wait until the nation agrees to manifest their will; they think and they act in the name of all, as if their group were really composed of the masses as a whole. Logic leads them to think and act as if they were those whole of the working class – in fact, the entire nation.

Besides, what proves to us that militant trade unionists are justified in considering themselves exponents of the aspirations and the will of all is that when circumstances require it – for example, in a case of strife with their employers – non-unionists follow the trade union lead and spontaneously group themselves, fighting side by side with their comrades who have organised the movement with patience and energy.

The non-unionists, the unthinking, need therefore not be offended by this sort of moral guardianship assumed by those with judgement. Militant trade unionists refuse none who come with goodwill, and those who are hurt at being treated as unworthy of notice need only withdraw from their inferior position, shake off their inertia, and enter a trade union.

More than this, laggards have no right to complain, as they profit by results gained by their comrades who think and fight, and benefit without having had to suffer in the struggle.

Thus the benefits gained by a few are extended to all, which proves the superiority of the trade union over democratic right. How far trade union principles are removed from middle class platitudes, which teach that every worker is the master of their own destiny! In the working class, every worker has the conviction that when fighting for themselves they are fighting for all, and it never

Could anything be more natural? Let us distinguish between the theoretical and abstract right that democracy dangles before our eyes, and the true and tangible right that represents the whole of our interests, and the starting point of which is an act of conscious individuality.

The right of every individual to rise against oppression and exploitation cannot be denied. The right of a man who stands alone to protest and rebel against all remains inalienable. Should it please the masses to bend their backs beneath the yoke and lick the boots of the masters, what matters it to him? The man who abhors cringing, and, unwilling to submit, rises and rebels, such as man has right on his side against all. His right is clear and unquestionable. The right of downtrodden masses, as long as it is restricted to the right of slavery, is unworthy of notice and cannot be compared to it. The right of these masses will only take shape and be worthy of respect when men, tired of obedience and working for others, dream of rebellion.

Therefore, when a group is formed within which men of judgement come into contact with one another, they need not take the apathy of the masses into account. It is enough for trade unionists to regret that non-thinkers lay aside their rights; they cannot allow them the strange privilege of impeding the proclamation and realisation of the right of a thinking minority.

Without any theory having been elaborated beforehand, trade unionists were inspired and guided by these ideas when they formed groups. They acted, and still act, in harmony with them.

From this we gather that trade union right has nothing in common with democratic right.

The one is the expression of unthinking majorities who form a compact mass that would stifle thinking minorities. By virtue of the dogma ”Sovereignty of the people”, which teaches that all men are brothers and equals, this democratic right ends by sanctioning economic slavery and oppressing men of initiative, progress, science and liberty.

justified by practical tests; on the contrary, it proceeds from the examination of historical events and of their clear interpretation. We may say that it is the result of a whole century of conflict between the working classes and the middle classes.

During the whole of the nineteenth century the proletariat strove to separate its movement from that of the purely political action of middle-class parties. This was indeed a great effort, for the middle classes wanting to govern without hindrance, the assent or indifference of the proletariat was necessary, and politicians exerted themselves, not only to fight and massacre proletarians when they rose against their exploiters, but also to make them tractable by a sham education, designed to turn them on from the examination of economic questions, and to cause their energy to drift towards the deceptive hope of democracy.

We cannot make it too clear that the autonomous working-class movement has been, and is still, obstructed by all the forces of obscurantism and reaction, and also by the democratic forces that are, but under new and hypocritical disguises, the continuation of old societies in which a handful of parasites and maintained in plenty by the forced labour of plebeians.

The middle classes, through the State, whose function, independently of its form, consists in protecting capitalist privileges, have applied themselves to stifling and deviating working class aspirations. Thus, during attempts at emancipation proletarians have been compelled to realise that the Governments they were subjected to were all alike, no matter by what name they were labelled. They passed from one rule to another without deriving any result from change of scenery, mentioned by history as of great importance. All governments treated them with animosity and ill-will. When they obtained from their rulers a mitigation of their wretched fate, they owed it, not to feelings of justice of pity, but to the wholesome fear they were able to inspire. To government initiative they are indebted for Draconian legislation, arbitrary measures, and savage reprisals.

Antagonisms between the state and the working classes dominates the whole of the nineteenth century. we see it most plainly when we observe that governments, by way of throwing their enemies a bone to gnaw, have readily conceded political rights to the people, while they have shown themselves intractable as far as regards economic liberties. In the latter case they have only given way to popular pressure.

The difference in behaviour on the part of the rulers is easily explained. Recognition of political rights to the people does the governments no harm, as these baubles do not imperil the principle of authority and do not undermine the class basis of society.

It is another story when economic liberties are in question. Thee are of real advantage to the people, and can only be acquired at the expense of the privileged. It is therefore evident that the State, the upholder of capitalism, refuses to the last to grant a particle of economic improvement.

The demonstration of this permanent conflict of the working class with the State would lead us into writing a martyrology of the proletariat. To prove the truth and constancy of this antagonism a few historical landmarks will suffice.

Lass than two years after the taking of the Bastille (June 1791), the bourgeoisie, by its mouthpiece, the Constituent Assembly, despoiled the working classes of their right to form associations[2], a right they had just obtained by revolutionary means.

The workers believed the Revolution to be the dawn of economic freedom. They thought the burning gates of Paris where town dues were collected (June 12, 1789) would destroy all barriers. Let us add that two days after the burning of the gates of Paris, the Bastille was taken by assault, not because it was a political prison, but because it was a danger to rebellious Paris, as was the Mont Valérien in 1871.

[2]La loi Chapelier, passed on June 17, 1791.

We have witnessed, in a very important circumstance, the politician Basly respect trade union principles and demand that hey be put into practise. It is almost superfluous to add that this manoeuvre on his part was unadulterated cunning, in order to discredit revolutionary tendencies. It was at the Miners' Conference held at Lens in 1901 when the question of a general strike was being discussed, that Basly endeavoured to impede the movement by proposing a referendum; and, contrary to democratic theories, he caused the Congress to decide that the number of non-voters should be added to the total of the majority.

This politician, who thought himself so cunning, would have been very astonished if it had been pointed out to him that, instead of having tricked the congress, he had acted as a revolutionary and had been inspired by trade union principles. Indeed, in this particular instance, Basly paid no attention to the opinion of men without judgement; he looked down on them as human zeros, only fit to be added to thinking units, as inert beings whose latent powers could only be put into motion by contact with energetic and bold men. This way of looking at things is the negation of democratic theories that proclaim equality of rights for all, and teach that the sovereign will of the people is fully carried out by means of universal suffrage. Basly was not clear on this point, and for a while, forgetting his political theories, he was easily influenced by the economic doctrines of his surroundings.

Let us also remark that democracy has never been in vogue amongst corporate groups. Face to face with social needs, combatants in the ranks of trade unions solved problems as their common sense taught them. Their deeds, therefore, preceded the declaration of trade union principles.

Trade unionists have never believed that they must consult the entire working class according to rule, and suit their action to please the majority. As many as were of one mind formed a group, and presented their claims without taking heed of non-thinkers.

In the present, the permanent mission of the trade union is to defend itself against any reduction of vitality – that is to say, against any reduction of wages and increase in working hours. Besides resisting attack, it must play a pro-active part and strive to increase the well-being of the union, which can only be realised by trespassing on capitalist privileges, and constitutes a sort of partial expropriation.

Besides this talk of incessant skirmishes, the union is engaged in the work of integral emancipation, of which it will effectively be the agent. It will consist of taking possession of social wealth, now in the hands of the middle class, and in reorganising society on a Libertarian Communist basis, so that the maximum amount of social well-being will be achieved with a minimum of productive effort.

THE RIGHT OF TRADE UNIONISM

We will now examine how trade unionism is constituted. Forming part of a certain class, an infinitesimal minority of bold individuals, possessing enough character, create a group in order to resist and to fight capitalists.

What will the attitude taken by this handful of militants be? Will they wait until they have won over, if not the whole, at least the majority of their Fellow Workers belonging to the class, to state their claims?

They would act in this way if into the economic struggle they introduced the political prejudices held by the majority.

But as the everyday practical demands of the struggle are more urgent than democratic sophisms, the logic of life impels them into action, towards new ideas opposed to the political formulas with which they have been saturated. To obtain this result, it is not necessary for the combatants to possess a great quantity of judgement, but only if they not be paralysed by formulas and abstractions.

Workers taken in by the enthusiastic strains of pamphleteers thought themselves freed from the trammels of the ancient régime, and began to come to an understanding with one another and to group themselves in order to resist exploitation. They formulated precise claims. The bourgeoisie soon proved to them that the Revolution was only political and not economic. It elaborated repressive laws, and as the workers lacked knowledge and experience, as their agitation was confused and still incoherent, it was not hard for the government to check this movement.

We should be mistaken in supposing that the Chapelier law was expedient, and that those who voted for it ignored its effect on social life. To make us swallow this fanciful interpretation, we are told that Revolutionists of that period raised no protest against it. Their silence only shows us that they ignored the social aspect of the Revolution they took part in, and that they were only pure Democrats. Moreover, there is nothing astonishing in their great want of foresight, and even today we see men pretending to be Socialists who are also merely simple Democrats.

As a proof that the parliamentarians of 1791 know what they were about, some months later, in September 1791, the Constituent Assembly strengthened the Chapelier law prohibiting combinations among industrial workers, by enacting another law that made associations of agricultural labourers illegal.

The Constituent was not the only Assembly that manifested its hatred of the working masses. All Assemblies that followed strove to tighten the bounds enslaving the worker to his employer. More than this, seeing that passing laws trying to make it impossible for workmen to discuss and defend their interests was insufficient, bourgeois Assemblies contrived to aggravate the wretched position of proletarians by putting them under absolute police control.

The Convention did not prove more sympathetic to the working classes. In the month of Nivóse of the year II, it legislated ”against coalition of workmen, employed in different trades, who, by writing or by emissaries, incite to the cessation of work.” This behaviour

of the Convention, the revolutionarism of which meets with so much praise, clearly proves that political opinions have nothing to do with economic interests. A still better proof is that, in spite of the changes in governmental forms, starting from the Democracy of the Convention, the Autocracy of Napoleon 1, the Monarchy of Charles X, to the Constitutionalism of Louis-Phillipe, never were the severity of the laws against workmen mitigated.

Under the consulate, in the year XI (1803), a new link to the slaves' chain was forged – the Certificate Book, which made the working men a class of specifically registered individuals. Then, with their vile and crafty legal procedure, and their lawyers who drafted the Code we still suffer from, rulers tied down and gagged the proletariat so well that Louis XVIII and Charles X, heirs to this baggage, did not need to increase it.

Nevertheless, in spite of severe legislative prohibitions, the workers came to an understanding, grouped themselves under mild forms such as "mutualities", and constituted embryo trade unions for organising resistance. The combinations grew to such an extent that strikes multiplied, and the Liberal government of Louis-Phillipe inflicted greater penalties against associations (1834). But the impetus had been given! This recrudescence of legal severity did not stop the movement of the workers. In spite of the law, the Sociétés de Résistance multiplied, and were followed by a period of growing agitation and numerous strikes.

The Revolution of 1848 was the result of this movement. A proof of the economic scope of this Revolution is that economic questions took precedence over all others. Unfortunately, the corporate groups lacked experience. The urban workers ignored the peasants, and vice versa. Thus in 1848 the peasants did not stir, not understanding the working class movement; likewise in 1852 the town workers understood nothing of the peasants' attempt at insurrection. In spite of these failures – and there were many others – all improvements were due to working class energy. It was the will of

It is not astonishing that corporative groups have such an intense vitality. Their absolute annihilation is impossible to realise. In order to succeed it would be necessary to destroy society itself. Indeed, the corporate group has its roots in the existing form of production, and normally proceeds from it. Now, as association for production is an inevitable necessity, how could it be possible for workers gathered together for this purpose to limit their cooperation to matters only useful to their employers, who benefit by exploitation in common? In order to satisfy capitalist interests, producers were brought together in economic groups, and they would have had the intelligence of molluscs had they not enough judgement to overstep the boundaries imposed on them by their exploiters.

Workers possessing a bit of common sense were inevitably brought to see the flagrant antagonism that makes them, the producers, the irreconcilable enemies of their employers; they are the robbed, their employers are the robbers. Therefore, for them the discord is so radical that only politicians or employers' flunkeys can spout garbage about "harmony between capital and labour."

Besides, it would not take long for wage-earners to recognise that the employers' rapacity is the more exacting, the weaker is working class resistance. Now it is easy to prove that the isolation of the wage-earner constitutes their maximum of weakness. Consequently, cooperation for production having already taught the exploited to appreciate the benefits of association, they only needed will and initiative to create a group for workers' self-defence.

They soon learned its value. The middle classes, who had no fear of the "People as electors". were compelled by the people as a "trade union" to recognise the right of combination and trade union freedom.

In consideration of these first results, repeated attempts have been made to divert the working class from the trade union. In spite of such manoeuvres, the part played by the trade union has grown clearer and more precise, so much so that in future it can be thus defined:

invincible necessities of present society and the obstacles put in the way by a central authority, nothing effectual could be attempted against them.

By Socialist push, the same conquest of municipalities has been realised in working-class districts; the benefit to the workers has been small. The municipalities annihilated by the government have not been able to realise their programme, and disillusions have been the consequence. Yet another danger. Workers have turned from their union to political efforts, all their energy has gone in this direction and they have neglected economic organisation, so that bad employers, whose exploiting ferocity has no limits, have benefited by not finding an active and vigorous trade union group to oppose them.

In the north of France – Roubaix, Armentières, etc. – where municipalities are or have been Socialistic, wages are frightfully low. In the Ardennes the same goes. There numerous trade unions had been formed, but the members having allowed themselves to be completely absorbed by politics, the unions have lost the power of opposing their employers.

To all these defects Democracy adds, if possible, yet a greater mistake. Progress, as demonstrated by the whole of our historic past, is the consequence of the revolutionary efforts of conscious minorities. Now Democracy organises the stifling of minorities to the profit of sheepish and conservative majorities [or to their mutual fleecing? - transcribers' note].

The work of deviating the economic movement attempted by the middle class could only be momentary. The corporative group is not the result of artificial growth. It springs up and develops spontaneously and inevitably in all surroundings. It is to be found in ancient times, in the Middle Ages, and today, and we can show that at all times its development has been obstructed by the possessor of privileges, who, fearing the expansive power of this method of organisation, took up the cudgels against it – without, however, succeeding in destroying it.

the workers that was expressed in the Luxembourg Commission and was legally registered by the Provisional Government.

In the first hours of the Revolution the frightened middle classes showed themselves conciliatory, and to save capitalism were disposed to sacrifice a few trifling privileges. They were, however, soon reassured, by the inoculation of the people with a political virus – universal suffrage – as much as by inconsistency on the part of the coporative organisations, and their ferocity became as great as had been their fear. The massacres of June 1848, were for the middle classes the first instalment of satisfaction. Soon after, in 1849, the representatives of the people, proving themselves simply the representatives of the middle classes, legislated against associations. They were prohibited, and their members subjected to penalties decreed in the law of 1810.

As the reaction of Louis-Phillipe failed to check the working class movement, so did the Republican and Napoleonic governments fail. Without troubling themselves about the form of government, or with the prohibition to combine, the corporate groups continued to develop in number and in strength, so much so that by their pressure on public authorities they wrung from the government legal sanction for the aemeloriations and liberties they had forcibly acquired, thanks to their revolutionary vigour.

It was by what we now call Direct Action that the right of combination was wrung from Caesarism in 1864. The workers of all associations grouped themselves, combined and went on strike without taking the least heed of the law. Beyond all others, the printers distinguished themselves by their revolutionary character, and in Paris (1862) one of their strikes was the determining event that brought about the recognition of the right to combine. The government, blind like all others, thought to kill the movement by striking a great blow. Wholesale arrests took place. All the members of the strike committee were imprisoned, as well as the most active amongst the strikers.

This arbitrary abuse of power, far from terrorising, excited public opinion, and such a current of indignation resulted from it that the government was obliged to capitulate, and to recognise the workers' right to combination. This was due only to pressure from without. It would be difficult to attribute this success to Socialist deputies, for the excellent reason that there were none in Parliament.

The conquest of the right to combine so stimulated trade union organisation, it grew so rapidly irresistible, that the state was compelled to put a good face on a bad matter. In 1863 trade union liberty was recognised by an Imperial circular, which said, "As to the organisation of working class association, the Administration must leave to those interested in them full liberty."

Meanwhile, the International Workers' Association, definitively constituted in 1864, after several earlier fruitless attempts, shed its rays on Western Europe and opened up new horizons to the working class, horizons that were to be obscured by the great crisis of 1871.

Let us now stop, so as not to be lured on too far by this retrospective summary, and let us draw logical conclusions from it.

From the landmarks of history that we have mentioned, it follows that at the dawn of the present régime, in 1791, the government, as defender of the privileges of the middle classes, denied and refused all economic rights to working men, and ground them down until they were like particles of dust, having no cohesion with one another, so that they were at the mercy of exploitation.

Later on the workers emerged from chaos, on which the middle classes would like to keep them. They grouped themselves on economic ground apart from any politics. The government, whatever name it is labelled with, tries to arrest the proletarian movement, and not succeeding, makes up its mind to sanction the improvements or liberties obtained by the workers. The most salient point in all these agitations and these social shocks is that exploited and exploiters, governors and governed, have interested, not only dis-

of association they had just stifled, taught the people to turn to the mirage of political sovereignty, the powerless manifestations of which would not disturb capitalist exploitation. The fraud succeeded so well that the belief in political equality – that great hoax – has done a good service in keeping the masses down during the last century.

Only a small amount of wisdom is required to understand that the capitalist and the worker, the landowner and the dispossessed, are not equals. Equality is not a fact because both rich and poor are in the possession of a voting ticket.

And yet the fraud goes on. It goes on to such an extent that even today there are, amongst well-meaning people, those who still have confidence in these idle fancies.

They are victims of a superficial logic; they sum up the influence of the popular masses and compare it to the numerical weakness of the governing minority, and suppose that the education of the masses is enough to ensure that they will triumph by means of the normal action of majorities.

They do not see that the democratic grouping, with universal suffrage as a basis, in not a homogenous or lasting association, and that it is impossible to regulate it with a view to persistent action.

This group brings together temporary citizens whose interests are not identical, such as employers and employed, and when it unites them, it only confers on them the right to decide about abstractions or illusions.

The want of coherence in Parliaments, their ignorance of popular aspirations and also their powerlessness, are facts that have been sifted through so carefully that it is useless to dwell on them. The result is no better when we examine the consequences of universal suffrage in municipal districts. A few briefly-described examples will demonstrate this.

During the last quarter of a century rural municipalities have been, for the most part, in the hands of peasants. Wealthy landowners were not opposed to this conquest, knowing that, owing to the

Under the old system the military career was a profession like any other, only more barbarous; and the army, in which the patriotic big drum was not beaten, was a medley of mercenaries "marching" for pay. After the Revolution the middle classes devised a blood tax – conscription for the people, a natural deduction from the hypothesis that in future the Fatherland was to be "everybody's property"; but it has continued to be "the property of a few," and these few have, thanks to the new system, solved the problem of causing their privileges to be protected by others, by those despoiled of their inheritance.

Here, indeed, appears a formidable contradiction. The bonds of nationality, of which militarism is a tangible form, and which we are told tends to the defence of common interests, has a diametrically opposite result – it checks working-class aspirations.

It is not the ideological frontier that separates nations into English, French, Germans, etc., that the army watches over, but principally the frontier of riches in order to keep the poor chained up in poverty.

The Democratic Curb

The middle class has itself as crafty in a democratic direction. Having conquered political power and secured for itself economic domination, it took care not to destroy the mechanism that had been of use to the aristocracy. It confined itself to replastering the State frontage enough to change its appearance, and to get it accepted as a new power by the people.

Now in society there is nothing real, except for economic functions, which are completely sufficient for individuals and useful to groups. Consequently, all exterior crystallisation and all political superfluity are parasitic and oppressive excrescences, and therefore noxious.

But of this the people had no consciousness, and so it was easy to fool them.

The middle class, with the intention of impeding the blossoming of economic sovereignty which was germinating in the freedom

tinct, but opposed; and that between them a class war in the truest sense of the term.

In the short summary given we see the drift of the trade union movement, untrammelled by parliamentary contamination, and the wisdom of working men's associations on solid economic ground, which is the base of all true progress.

AGREEMENT IN ORDER TO LIVE

Basis of Social Harmony

Having demonstrated that, from a historical point of view, the trade union movement of the 20th century is the normal consequence of the working class efforts of the 19th century, we must now examine the value of this movement from a philosophical and social point of view. To begin with, let us set down the premises in a few lines. Man is a sociable animal. He cannot, and has never been able to, live isolated in the world. It is impossible to conceive the life of men who do not form a social group. However rudimentary were primitive human agglomerations, men always gathered together in associations. It is not true, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, theorist of democratic servitude, taught – that before they formed societies men lived in a "state of nature", and were only able to emerge from it when they relinquished some of their natural rights by means of a "social contract."

This idle nonsense, now out of date, was much in vogue at the end of the 18th century. It inspired the revolutionary middle class in 1789-93, and it continues to be the basis of law and of institutions that hamper us.

However erroneous Jean-Jacques Rousseau's sophisms may be, they have the advantage of giving a philosophical varnish to the principle of authority, and of being the theoretical expression of middle class interests. For this reason the middle class made them its own. It drew them up in the "Declaration of the Rights of Man,"

as well as in articles of the ”Code” of laws, so as to set up for itself a complete compendium of exploitation and domination.

Neither is it true, as proclaimed by Darwinists, that society is but a battlefield where the struggle for existence alone regulates the action of human beings. This theory, as monstrous as it is erroneous, gives a false hypocritical and scientific varnish to the worst forms of exploitation. By these means the middle classes construe that the exploiter is the strong being produced by natural selection, whereas the exploited is a weak being, the victim of an invincible necessity (also natural); and that the weak are compelled to vegetate or disappear as the strong derives profit from one or another of these solutions.

Such a theory could only take root by an arbitrary and erroneous interpretation of Darwin’s ideas. If it were true, it could only apply to different species anyway. War among one species is an accidental monstrosity, among different species, living in association, it is also unnatural, for harmony is an unquestionable necessity.

The agreement in order to live, far from causing a diminution of individuality in man, is a means of accruing and multiplying his power of well-being. The examination of the real conditions of life that prevail in human species ends in the negation of theories circulated by the dominant classes, theories that only aim at facilitating and justifying exploitation of the masses.

Indeed, although both doctrines – the democratism of JJ Rousseau of the 18th century and the middle-class Darwinism of the 19th – have theoretical distinctions, they come to the same conclusions: they proclaim the spirit of renunciation, and teach that ”the liberty of each is limited by the liberty of others”. By means of these doctrines, the spirit of sacrifice that went out of fashion and was discredited in its religious aspect has again risen and become a social principle. These doctrines teach that as soon as man agrees to live in society, he of necessity agrees to renounce some of his natural rights. This renunciation he makes on the altar of author-

ness, and to hinder the idea of association with an economic basis, the reappearance of which it dreaded, the middle class manoeuvred to substitute in the place of true bonds of solidarity resulting from identical interests fictitious and deceptive bonds of citizenship and democracy.

Religion, which until then had served the powerful of the earth to check and restrain the tendency towards improvement of their lot that impelled the people, was relegated to the background. Not that the middle class distained the brutalising power of this ”curb,” but it considered religion out of date and as having done its work. The middle class professed Voltairianism, and although it attacked priests, it suggested to the working classes superstitions just as debasing as those of Christianity. SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PEOPLE! HOME AND COUNTRY! These became the fashionable idols.

The Patriotic Curb

In a civic direction the middle class glorified patriotic sentimentality. The ideological lines that unite men born by chance between variable frontiers surrounding a certain territory were glorified as sacred. They earnestly taught that the most glorious day in the life of a patriot is the one in which they have the pleasure of being butchered for their country.

They deceived the people with such nonsense and hindered them from reflecting on the philosophical value of the moral virus they were being infected with. Thanks to the sound of trumpet and drum, warlike songs and jingoistic bluster, they were trained to defend what they had not got: their inheritance. Patriotism can only be explained by the fact that all patriots without distinction own a part of social property, and nothing is more absurd than a patriot without patrimony.

Notwithstanding the absurdity, proletarians have reached the point at which they do not possess a clod of the national soil; it follows that there is absolutely no reason for their patriotism, which is just a disease.

the productive group to perform its function normally, it must raise the individual, and it must never tend to diminish their autonomy under any pretext whatsoever.

Most assuredly, the awareness of the fundamental part played by the producer in society, and the group of which they have the right to be an integral part, is relatively new. The identity of interests and communion of aspirations amongst producers, coordinated according to their needs, their professional activities and their tendencies, have not always been as tangible as now. The understanding of social phenomena was impeded by ignorance, even without taking into account the fact that economic development had not then acquired the acuteness of our times. Another cause impeding comprehension sprung from the survival of the dominant part formerly played by family groups. At a given moment, when humanity was mostly composed of hunting and pastoral tribes, the family fulfilled the function of social nucleus, a phenomenon explained by the fact that in those far-off ages production, both industrial and agricultural, hardly went beyond the family circle, so that this form of association being enough for basic needs, barter had not begun to modify existing conditions.

Today these conditions have been subjected to such a transformation that it is impossible to consider the family as an organic nucleus. It would indeed be equivalent to legitimising all forms of slavery, for all slavery follows as a consequence of an authority that the head of the family appropriates, by virtue of his supposed strength and ancestry.

Besides, nobody dreams of such regression. In quite another direction did the middle class at the dawn of its revolution in 1789 try to guide the tendencies of the people towards sociability. The middle class, needing men who would work, who would be flexible, malleable and deprived of all power of resistance, destroyed the bonds of true solidarity, the class – under pretext of uprooting trade privileges formerly looked upon with favour by the old regime. Then, to fill the empty space left in the popular conscious-

ity and property, and in exchange he acquires the hope of enjoying the rights that have survived his sacrifice.

Modern nations led away by metaphysics, now wearing a scientific, now a democratic mask, have bent their backs and sacrificed their rights; for these doctrines have been so drilled into them that today even citizens who pride themselves on being so intellectually emancipated accept as an unquestionable axiom that the liberty of each is limited by the liberty of others.

This lying formula will not bear examination; it means nothing more and nothing less than a constant and perpetual antagonism between human beings. If it had any truth in it, progress would have been impossible, for life would have been a continual struggle of enraged wild beasts. As the human animal could have only satisfied his wants by injuring his fellow human beings, it would have meant neverending struggles, wars and unlimited ferocity.

But in spite of all criminal theories that represent society as a battlefield, and men as beings only able to exist if they injure one another, tear one another to pieces and devour one another, we have progressed, and the idea of solidarity has flourished because the instinct of social harmony is more powerful than the theories of the struggle for existence.

This deduction may be objected to by some, who say that the state has been an agent of progress, and that its intervention has been moralising and pacifying. This allegation completes the sophisms quoted above. The ”order” created by the state has consisted only of repressing and oppressing the masses in order that a privileged minority might profit, the masses being made malleable by the belief they have been impregnated with, consisting in the admission that the renunciation of part of their ”natural rights” is necessary when they agree to a ”social contract.”

We must oppose the middle class definition of liberty that sanctions slavery and misery with a contrary formula, that which is the real expression of social truth, arising from the fundamental prin-

ciple of "harmony in order to struggle" – that is, the liberty of each grows when in touch with the liberty of others.

The unquestionable evidence of this definition explains the progressive development of human societies. The power of harmony in order to live has a dynamic force superior to the forces of division, repression and suppression exercised by parasitical minorities. That is why societies have progressed. That is why they have not consisted solely of butchery, ruins and mourning.

It is to our advantage to become impregnated with this notion of liberty, in order to be proofed against the inculcation of middle class sophisms, so as to be able to understand what the word "society" means. It means that the chief propelling power is humanity is harmony and association.

Let us also understand that SOCIETY is the agglomeration of those individuals that constitute it, and that it has no individual life of its own apart from them; consequently there can be no question of aiming at happiness other than that of the individual happiness of the human beings composing society.

UNION FOR PRODUCTION - THE EMBRYO OF SOCIETY

Civic and Democratic Derivatives

Harmony and concord in the battle of life being recognised as the social pivot, it follows that society's method of aggregation will consist of groups; and in order that individual growth may not be stunted and that it should ever continue developing, it is necessary for the group to be in complete accord with economic functions.

For human beings these functions have two irreducible actions – (1) Consumption; (2) Production. We are born consumers, and we become producers. Such is the normal process.

The Consumer

As a consumer, a human being should follow his own inclination, and in fulfilling this role only think if his needs, the satisfaction of which will perforce be limited by possibilities. Consumption is the measure of social development: the greater it is for each, the higher is the level of well-being. Present society works in no way along these lines. Far from being free, the individual is subject to prohibitions and obstacles that can only be removed by means of money. Now, as the money is seized by the governing class, this class, thanks to the privileges it enjoys, consumes according to its will and pleasure. On the other hand, the workers, who have made natural products consumable, and who besides this have benefited the capitalist from whom they receive wages, are placed in a position in which it is impossible for them to consume according to their needs.

Such an inequity is intolerable. It is monstrous that individuals, save children, invalids and old people, should be able to consume without producing. It is also monstrous that the real producers should be deprived of the possibility of consuming.

Consumption takes precedence over production, for we consume long before we are capable of producing. Yet in social organisation it is necessary to invert these terms and make production the starting point.

The Producer

The producer is the basis of everything. She or he fulfils the essential organic function that preserves society from extinction. They are also the first cell of economic life. It is their union and good understanding with other producers who work with the same purpose in mind – that is to say, at the same industry, the same trade, with similar efforts – that creates the bonds of solidarity which, like a net, stretches over the human collectivity.

This enforced and logical harmony causes UNION FOR PRODUCTION, which is the foundation of society. No other form of association is so necessary. All others are of a secondary nature. It alone is the social nucleus, the centre of economic activity. But for