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The Socialism and Anti-Parliamentarism of William Morris

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1915

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On every side as loud as thunder
The tramp of nations now is heard
Enlisting freedom's banner under
Obedient to her sovereign word.
Obedient to her sovereign word.
No dungeons then or chains shall tame us
Nor scourge nor gallows tree affright
For freedom's ensign waving bright
With scorn of danger doth inflame us.

Chorus:

There is another version, in which the first line of the chorus has been altered to "Arise! arise! ye brave! " But why should the brave arise, if not to do battle? "To arms!" does not necessarily imply murder. It means struggle ending in triumph, without depicting the exact character of the struggle. The alteration seems a little hypocritical or, at least, pedantic.

Author's Note. — David Nicoll's story is told in greater detail in an appendix in *Discarded Dogmas*, Part II.

The Socialism of William Morris

Slightly revised from a shorthand report of a lecture delivered at the Seamore Picture House, Glasgow, October 25th, 1915.

My subject tonight is "The Socialism of William Morris." In 'dealing with this subject, I may say a few things that will come as a surprise to many orthodox Socialists who may be present, and to strangers who know nothing about Socialism or the movement. What I shall say will not be from the standpoint of wishing to shock people, but from that of educating them. If what I say seems a little strange or new, therefore, my hearers should remember that, from time to time, we come up against facts and ideals which are strange. The strange, however, is not to be resented necessarily. The strange may gradually enlighten and so change forms and ideas.

William Morris is appreciated greatly in the world of capitalist culture. That is to say, he is spoken and is written about a great deal. While there is quite a number of people who have much evil to urge against Socialism, there is a vast number who have nothing but good to say about William Morris. That is not because Morris was good. It is purely a custom to speak well of William Morris in order to be regarded as occupying a certain position in the world of art and letters. William "Morris possessed a certain amount of self-confidence, and by virtue of that confidence, and his money, he forced the world to recognize his mastership in the fine arts.

In our religious institutions, folk talk about Jesus Christ, meaning the myth; but there is not a single parson who knows or cares about Jesus the man, his type, or his class among the ministers who are preaching in Glasgow to-night. They talk and pray, because it is the custom to do so.

When people talk of literature, discuss authors and poets, they most frequently are not concerned with understanding the poets

or authors, but are taken up entirely with getting an easy position. By flattering some recognized institution in literature, they hope to be recognized as litterateurs.

That is the position of William Morris. That is why you find critics in arts praising him, not because of his Socialism, but trying to praise him in spite of his Socialism, by pretending that art is a very important thing itself and something that has no place in Socialism. They do not realize that art and literature can have no reality without Socialism: that all culture is devoid of meaning, is sham and hypocrisy, unless you come down to the fundamental economic question.

William Morris was born in the 1834. More or less that was an eventful period in British history. The year 1834 was the beginning of the present constitutional regime in Britain. It saw the close of that period of struggle for the rights of political independence on the part of the people which began with the period of the French Revolution and went on through the Napoleonic Wars. Alive at the time when Morris was born were a number of persons who had made a hard struggle for the free press, for the Rights of the People to understand politics : persons who had suffered years in prison for blasphemy and sedition under absurd Acts of Parliament. William Morris was not born into an atmosphere or environment that was likely to make him interested in this struggle at first. He was born in an atmosphere of middle-class respectability, one of religion and conventional Charlatanism. Its prevailing idea was not that which works with the people, but that which goes against the people in their struggle.

In his early years, the only thing that he secured in the way of knowledge and culture which influenced his Socialism, was his love of heraldry, and a tendency to worship things which seemed entirely out of date with the commercial period in which he lived—a tendency to plunge into -Gothic architecture. This lasted throughout his life, and influenced his later ideas.

Shall tyrants always crush you down?
Lo, they have reaped and ye have sown.
The time hath come your bonds to sever.

CHORUS.

To arms! to arms! again!
The Red Flag waves on high!
March on! march on!
A gallant band
March on—to liberty.

Long have yee heard your children weeping,
For bread they cried in vain to you.
Why do you lie there dreaming, sleeping.
When there is work and deeds to do?
When there is work and deeds to do?
Your lords and masters pile their plunder
They feast and prey and do not spare.
But from your weary toil and care
They wring the wealth at which ye wonder.

Chorus:

Tho' force and fraud alike oppose you,
Yet in your hand is skill and power.
And tho' the tyrant hosts enclose you
And overhead the black clouds lower.
And overhead the black clouds lower.
Yet what are force and fraud before ye
But as the leaves of autumn trees
Borne wildly forward on the breeze
When the storm rises in its fury.

Chorus:

“Call a general conference‘? To what end? What more could we discover at it than that we didn’t agree? Besides, these conferences are really bogus affairs. In short my dear boy, whenever you want to get rid of me, you need never put on your boots. I never wait to be *kicked* downstairs.”

The triumph of the Anarchists was the inevitable consequence of the justifiable expulsion of the Bloomsbury Branch, and Morris intended his article on David Nicoll’s folly as “farewell” to the League. He had no intention of remaining in the League after that and fighting the Anarchists and he could not cooperate with them:

“For, in good truth, I would almost as soon join a White Rose Society as an Anarchist one; such nonsense as I deem the latter.”

We know what a broken reed Bruce Glasier turned out to be. David Nicoll, whose attack on Scotland Yard Morris denounced as being foolish and ineffective, died in poverty and madness, years after his release from prison. It was a pathetic sight to see him at Socialist meetings endeavoring to sell the products of his insanity, for he had been broken in the workers’ cause. We remember him well as a figure at the Chandos Hall, Charlotte Street Club, and Jubilee Street meetings in London. He will be remembered to the end of the workers’ struggle by his new version of the Marseillaise, written in his clays of hope and strength and valorous dedication :-

Ye sons of freedom, wake! ’tis morning,
’Tis time from slumber to arise,
On high the redden’d sun gives warning
That day is here, the black night flies.
That day is here, the black night flies.
And will ye lie In sleep for ever?

Down to the “fifties” there was nothing great in William Morris’s life. In that year he went to Oxford, where, he took up with the High Church Party against the Low Church Party; an act which afterwards influenced his Socialism.

Morris, in his love for Gothic Architecture, was expressing not the old Pagan tendency of ancient and Imperial Rome, but still a Pagan tendency; the Pagan tendency of the ancient barbarians, of the Goths, and of the people who believed, not in parasitic art or in effeminate art as the Greeks believed, but who believed in art which represented the joy of life. Throughout his life, Morris consistently cherished his sympathy for Gothic Architecture on this account; because it represented life’s barbarian earnestness against mock society’s cultured sham, and expressed the rich joy of labor as opposed to the misery of mere toil.

This barbarian tendency came out in his love of medievalism and found expression in his association with the High Church Party. The Low Church Party in England has much in common with the Non-Conformist Party, and is almost identical with the latter in its prejudices against sacerdotalism and joy in worship. Like the Non-conformist Party, the Low Church faction believed in worshipping God in the simplest form possible. Often, this meant the ugliest and most severe. This view reflected the piety of the time of Oliver Cromwell, the period when the joys of King Charles’ merry court and profligate pleasure code were abolished in favor of stern, rigorous, discipline. In many ways, his virtuous outlook was quite good, but it was completely joyless. That very joylessness condemned it to collapse, because it is not natural for a man to want to spend all his life in a penitentiary. Yet that is what the evangelical and nonconformist outlook amounts to.

William Morris caught the enthusiasm of the High Church Party and the Paganism behind it. The consequence is that we find him obtaining a rich understanding of the symbolism of art.

After some time, Morris discarded the idea of becoming a priest and going into the servitude of the Church. He determined to be-

come an architect; and we have a record of him studying architecture for some time. But coming under the influence of Rossetti, he abandoned the idea in favor of becoming a painter. Meantime, he had been studying architecture because of his love for the Goths and the Gothic architecture. Through this abandonment of love he gained a great practical knowledge of architecture and the pursuit of art—art worked out for itself and not pursued with leisured ease in a mere parasitical study. He was a man who could embody for himself the almost forgotten and misunderstood tendency of the Pagan Goths.

This man came into conflict with a world full of sham, a world Christian and evangelical in the worst senses of those much abused terms; not Christian in the robust, primitive sense of good works or of righteousness; but Christian in the later political established sense of that miserable contemptible Pagan compromise of Church and Constantine; Christian in the sense of the corruption of the fourth and fifth centuries.

In 1870, Morris began to get interested in politics. Previously, he had kept aside from politics because he felt if he had to give his energy to politics, it would be necessary to cast aside all his art and literature and love of painting, and love of studying this and that phase of ancient heraldry. It meant throwing away the very rich life and charm of medievalism which belonged to him.

Morris was impelled by this intense reverence for the past to challenge the great restoration movement which swept over the land in the “seventies.” This was a movement to “restore” ancient churches, against which Morris protested, on the ground that the “restoration” of ancient churches meant their abolition. Accordingly, he formed a society to prevent this “restoration,” except where it signified only the keeping out of wind and rain.

I confess that, personally, I am not a great deal interested in medievalism. I think that the future will be a great deal more inspiring than the past, and that the present is the material out of which to construct that future. But Morris was expressing to the

is a giant’s task, lending inspiration and content to the life of each man and woman who participates in it: the complete undermining of the capitalist system, the death of an allegiance to it in the hearts of men. That he stumbled on the threshold of greatness, that he failed so completely in final clearness of vision, earns for Morris our sorrow. So near — and yet so far!

How strange that it should require so many philosophers to vision the new social order! How awkwardly each visions! St. Simon saw clearly the idea Morris was groping for, saw it years before Morris was born: the liquidation of all political society, the complete industrialization of society. And Proudhon discovers the true explanation of the non-appeal of Anti-Parliamentarism: the tendency of the oppressed to exhaust the power of established and entrenched law and custom to alleviate social misery, before swinging to the side of revolution for the solution by social change. This is the law of progress, of evolving social revolution. Inevitable inherent conservatism which secures finally the triumph of the revolution.

Morris writes to Glasier, in November, 1891, explaining his determination to stand aloof, equally, from uninformed Anarchist agitation and from parliamentary action. He described the two parties struggling for supremacy in the Socialist League: “the old Communist one, with which it began, and the Anarchist.” The result is constant quarrel. Morris adds :—

“I have gone through this, as you well know, before; and I am determined never to stand it again. As soon as there are two parties in any body I am in, then out I go.”

Morris explains the position and strength of the Hammersmith Branch, and concludes that the best policy is to break from the Socialist League and form the Hammersmith Socialist Society, which “will disclaim both parliamentarism and Anarchism.” He explains his feelings:

not parliamentarism, is the parent of the new social order. Labor Parliamentarism is the last bulwark of capitalism. Its negation will destroy political society.

The parliamentarians were routed and William Morris now found himself the center of a struggle between the Communist and Anarchist elements. He is pleased at the rout of the parliamentarians, but has no sympathy with Anarchy. The division is lamentable but *not* discouraging.

Morris writes to Bruce Glasier on March 19, 1890, detailing his pessimism and the grounds for it. He anticipates the passing of the *Commonweal* and the Socialist League, but is no longer troubled by it. He adds :—

“Socialism is spreading, I suppose, on the only lines on which it could spread: and the League is moribund simply because we are outside these lines as I, for one, must always be: but I shall be able to do just as much work in the movement when the League is gone — as I do now.

“The main cause of the failure, which was obvious at least two years ago, is that you cannot keep a body together without giving it something to do in the present, and now, since people. will willingly listen to Socialist doctrine, our rank and file have nothing to do.”

This seems a strange and rather naive conclusion. What can the parliamentarians give their rank and file to do in the present? What have they given the rank and file to do except to toil in misery and employ their spare time in sacrificing to make a leader’s career and holiday? There is real work for Anti-Parliamentarism and Anti-Parliamentary organization to attend to: the real work of enunciating Socialism, of spreading the word, of exposing the futility of capitalist reformism, of emancipating the workers from their slavish regard and respect for capitalist honors and honor. It

full his own personality. That is the great lesson of his life, and that should be the great aim of every one of us present here tonight. We should be ourselves, and not clothes-props, elegantly or shabbily arrayed, according to circumstances, in suits composed of other men’s thoughts and dogmas.

We have to remember that no man can belong, truly, to any party or sect. Each one of us should, and must, belong to ourselves. The individual is greater than the nation. If each individual will insist on belonging to him or herself, and will express truly their view of things, a true relationship will spring up and unite in bonds of harmony the men and women of all lands.

William Morris was a Socialist after his own kind, and we must be Socialists after our kind. Brought by our similar circumstances to a certain common understanding, we still can find opportunity for ample expression of our own personalities.

We know that Britain is the noblest country the world ever has seen. We all know that there is no king who has had ancestors who believed so much in liberty, as our present King, George V. Witness George II., George III., George IV. Witness those who placed the stamp-tax on knowledge. Witness the suffering and imprisonment of the workers and the pioneers of political freedom under these sovereigns.

In 1870, Russia was interested in the Bulgarian atrocities. We all know how politicians live on atrocities. Prime Ministers, literally thrive on atrocities. No single government would be able to keep going if it was not for atrocities. The working men of all countries are so chivalrous. They never think of the slums at home. or of the starving children that inhabit these corners of the homeland; but any little story about people abroad will make these same workers weep copious tears.

At the particular period in the life of Morris to which I am referring now, Britain was the best friend of the Turks. Russia, in the “seventies,” got off on a morality campaign, but Britain backed up Turkey in her atrocities in Bulgaria. William Morris came into

the political arena and protested against this. Liberals and Radicals were protesting also. William Morris allied himself to the Liberal Party in consequence, but gave an entirely new interpretation to the Eastern Question.

He began to despise the middle-class. He saw that its Liberalism was but a makeshift, and that he had nothing in common with the Radical Party. He came to see that his own personal class were the worst class in society. He observed the energy that reposed in the working people, energy that must be let loose, energy that must be driven or persuaded in the right direction before we can have a decent society. So he began to examine the Eastern Question in this mood. He viewed it not as a political question but as a question which gave expression to economic tendencies in society, which was part of one great question — the emancipation of the world. From this time forward, William Morris became a Socialist.

In 1883, Morris took the great plunge and joined the Social Democratic Federation, whereby he was brought into full contact with the Socialist movement in this country. At the head of the S.D.E. was H. M. Hyndman. Mr. Hyndman was a politician pure and simple. He believed in a certain idea of Political or Parliamentary

Socialism — really capitalist state collectivism — which he imagined, or pretended to imagine, represented revolutionary Socialism. Unfortunately, Hyndman was accepted at his own valuation.

Working class experience lays down certain first principles of Socialism for the workers' movement to accept. These principles are expressed in the analysis of capitalism and the exposition of surplus value. He said to the workers in effect: "You have no rights in society. You do not count. You have no power whereby to give weight to your wishes or thoughts. Consequently, you have no influence. You have certain duties to perform in order to live and you are permitted to go about these duties and to live, so long as you can sell your labor-power. The moment you are unable to sell

Morris, in his Socialist League days, as a champion of the Communist Party policy. Morris here definitely repudiates all palliative proposals and the united front policy of parliamentarism, for which the C.P. stands. His "rebels" are very different persons from the C.P. members of Parliament. What he says is that we must not send Socialists to Parliament as legislators. That is correct. But he has not thought out how we shall send them. It is now quite clear, with the growing collapse of parliamentarism, what has to be done. We can write more definitely, more clearly, and, if less beautifully, yet more distinctly than Morris. It is all the fortune of time and circumstance. Watch the evolution of economic doctrine : note the respective doctrines of the Physiocrats, Adam Smith, Ricardo, and Malthus, Sisimondi, and St. Simon, on to Marx: the gradual yet definite evolution that so smoothly effects a complete revolution of vision and understanding in the matter of the dismal science; and then realize that the voice of William Morris, inevitably, must be, however powerful, less distinct than ours to-day. There is something immortal in every thinker, yet the thinker is not immortal. To-day, William Morris's points 3, 4, 5, and 6 can only have one meaning. Parliament is the representative of the enemy and must be treated as such. Under *no* circumstances must the workers return members to Parliament to talk and to legislate. They only can be returned, *if* returned at all, to liquidate and to abolish parliamentarism: *i.e.*, as rebels and ambassadors, to state the case against parliamentarism before the bar of the House of 'Commons, to refuse to take any oaths or make any declarations of allegiance, to decline to sit in the Commons, to work outside on the streets, preparing workers' opinion for the coming social change, evolving the conception of the new social order, building up the new social structure within the shell of the old. This is the furthest one can depart from the complete boycott of the ballot-box. And side by side with such departure, there must be developed a powerful and effective agitation for boycotting the ballot-box so that Laborism can never be represented in parliament: for industrialism,

such program, in short, as the ‘Stepping Stones’ of the S.D.F., which *I always disagreed with.*

“Such a step I could not support; for I could not Drench in favor of such measures (since I don’t believe in their efficacy) without lying and subterfuge, which are, surely, always anti-social.

“I hope you understand my position. I recapitulate:—

“1. Under no circumstances will I give up active propaganda,

“2. I will make every effort to keep the League together.

“3. We should treat Parliament as a representative of the enemy.

“4. We *might*, for some definite purpose, be forced to send members to Parliament as rebels.

“5. But under *no circumstances* to help to carry on the Government of the country.

“6. And, *therefore, we ought not to put forward palliative measures to be carried through Parliament, for that would be helping them to govern us.*

“7. If the League declares for this latter step it ceases to be what I thought it was, and I must try to do what I can outside it.

“8. But short of that I will work inside. it.”

Items 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 read together are very definite, and completely refute the attempt of the Communist Party to claim William

your la-hour-power, you have no right to existence, and you must die.”

That dictum was true when first propounded. The same dictum is true to-day. In the present war, those in authority do not say to us: “You are citizens! Consider now, is war right? Is it right for us to go to war?” No! they say: “We are at war and will make you go. Come — or be fetched!” When they make peace, they won’t say: “Your valor makes your presence desirable at this discussion and settlement of terms.” They will make peace without our aid, because they own and control us economically and politically and every other way. When, finally, we do become citizens it will not be with the aid of any king’s army, but we shall become citizens in opposition and in antagonism to the old influence of those who live on surplus value. Meanwhile, we are “My People!”

Karl Marx gave expression to this class war in society, this fundamental cleavage of aspiration and purpose begotten of economic antagonism, in a watchword which haunted Europe: “Workers of all lands, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to gain!”

He thus proclaimed a truth. This truth is true still. Marx, in expressing it, explained that his Socialism was something entirely opposed to all existing conditions of society. It was opposed to the family idea; it involved free-love; and it was opposed to the state. Marx said, if necessary, Socialism would not hesitate to be conceived in violence. He called its birth the Social Revolution, meaning a complete change of society, not mere parliamentary revolution, but Social Revolution, something more fundamental than a change of masters—an entire alteration of the social system, a radical transformation of its structure.

In 1874, when Hyndman’s Democratic Federation, which afterwards became the Social Democratic Federation was born, William Liebknecht united the small Marx party with the larger Lassalle party, with the result that a new Social Democratic Party was born, opposed to revolutionary Socialist principles, and uninterested in

the watchword of proletarian revolt. This party represented the surrender of the workers to the small traders' interests. It was essentially middle-class, essentially reformist, essentially comfortable, essentially wanting in all genius of revolution. Its watchword was Lassalle's cry: "Through universal suffrage to victory."

This watchword then represented, and continued to represent Hyndman's ideal. Hyndman swung in with the Social Democratic movement organized by Liebknecht, and became its pioneer in Britain, because the political revolution it aimed at accomplishing in the different countries was to establish a different governing class, and not to achieve a complete social insurrection.

Morris understood economics but did not have an intellect adaptable to grapple with dialectical economics. He took his own genius, his knowledge of medievalism and the expression of his sense of the joy of labor into the Socialist movement. He gave it his poetic vision and understanding of life, and the joy of being which Marx never brought into it. The consequence was that William Morris made a distinct contribution to Socialist thought, but purely because he was himself and not because he tried to model himself after someone else.

Morris, the poet, a man who saw the real nature of artistic values; Morris, who saw and said that truth was truth, came into contact with Hyndman and saw that he was a politician straining all his faculties to a certain end, namely, a political success under a system where all success must be shallow and pretentious; a political success which made John Burns possible, which allows a politician from the ranks of labor to get on, but leaves the workers at the end of the journey where they were at the beginning Morris was not a Social Democrat for a year when he broke away and founded the Socialist League. He realized that economic control is behind everything else. He realized that many of his late friends were merely Charlatans playing the game for their own ends; Charlatans like the Professors of Philosophy in our universities, the humbugs we put into power and into intellectual authority over us. If

"I quite agree with your views about the future of the League and the due position of a revolutionary party of principle as to its dealings with Parliament...

"As to myself, you may be sure that I will not be pedantically stiff about non-essentials. At the same time there are certain convictions which I cannot give up. And in action, there are certain courses which I cannot support.

"If you will re-read the editorial to the first number of the weekly *Commonweal* you will see my position stated exactly as I should state it now, and which was the position taken by all of us when the (Socialist) League was first founded. If the league reverses its views on these points it stultifies our action in leaving the S.D.F., and becomes a different body from that which I first joined. I should, therefore, be *forced* to my very great sorrow, to leave it, not for the purpose of sulking in my tent, but in order to try some other form of propaganda.

"I ought now to explain what would drive me out of the League, and how far I could meet our friends who are so anxious to have us take part in *Parliamentary action*.)¹L. A mere abstract resolution that we *might* have to send members to Parliament at some time or other would not drive me out. But I believe, *with you*, that, whatever they may think, our parliamentary friends would not be able to stop there, and that a necessary consequence of the passing of the Croydon resolution would have to be the issue of a program involving electioneering in the near future, and the immediate putting forward of a program of palliative measures to be carried through Parliament; some

There are those who worship the man, who rave about his poetry. I have spoken of them already. To others I would say: if we must respect the man and mention his name, let us do so truly, Don't let us mention the man and go on serving a prostitute philosophy of murder, which the present is. If we must worship the man, don't let us mention his name in the same breath or in the same article which asks a man to slay his fellow. Morris has a message for Socialists. It is to believe in Socialism. Any man who can reconcile his (Morris's) Socialism with the present day Society, does not understand Morris, and does not recognize what Socialism is.

Socialism is here to become practical. That sort of "Socialist army" which falls clown before kings; which "believes" in William Morris; which "believes" in Socialism and the call of art; which believes in military discipline; which believes in no man's conscience and has faith in no man's conscience, is impossible.

William Morris's call is a serious thing. If we accept the call of Socialism; if we feel its imperative necessity, then we must take and wear our armor. Socialism is something serious. 'When Socialism awakens in us a real love it must come to life and prove irresistible. Then we shall stand, Truth against Falsehood, Harmony against Discord. The battle will prove the consummation of all the preceding struggles, the end of the militarism of all the countries of the world, of the accursed capitalist system which is behind militarism, and political imbecility.

The ideal of realizing oneself entirely in harmony with one's fellows, that is the ideal of the message I want to deliver to-night.

William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism

William Morris explained his attitude towards parliamentarism in a letter that he addressed to Bruce Glasier from Kelmscott House, Hammersmith, on May 19, 1888 :-

people were true to their art, they would not tolerate these sleek purveyors of un wisdom in the position to which they have elected themselves.

Morris's Socialism, expressed in his poems, his contributions to *The Commonweal*, and in his lectures, was that economic was greater and more important than political control. That is the message which I want to drive home to-night. There can be no talk of working-class political power in this, or in any other society. There must be an end of political power in society if the workers are to be free. That end will correspond with the social revolution and a clear understanding of the economic position of the people, that will come when they try to analyze the conditions of society, and ask themselves why man is the slave of the machine.

Morris wanted comradeship; comradeship where no real comradeship could exist; and for this reason he was not an ideal Socialist.

Later, Morris was torn between the charlatan parliamentary element, which did not want action, and the Anarchist element, which is supposed to be very revolutionary and extreme, but which is lacking in the real genius of revolution as a civil factor. This Anarchist element preached violence and bombs and dynamite. It attracted to its cause police spies. But after all, you do not change imagination and give understanding to people by throwing bombs. We all bring our contribution of guilt and we all bring our contribution of commonsense and our contribution of slavery to this intolerable system of society, which makes slaves of us all.

This Anarchist movement meant really respecting nothing, not even its own principles. After all, man is a social problem and his integrity matters to himself, but there is an integrity which balances society and the real society of the future. Morris would not approach the evil thing. He saw that mere violence would lead nowhere. He knew, if he could get the consciousness of the people directed towards a sense of the poetry and the drama of the revolution; if he could get them to understand the poetry of every home

in Europe; if he could get their imagination stimulated until they saw all the past destiny of man, and the present sufferings of the slaves in every attic and in every cellar of slumland, there would arise a. people against whose liberties no one would dare conspire, a people who would be no more a mere prostitute civilization. Morris thought that if he could take the people selling their labor power and show them the light, slowly let drip into their lives the music of the water of understanding, that would be the beginning of a new education.

Morris went back to the parliamentary party, much to the delight of politician and war-monger, H. M. Hyndman. Rejoicing at this devolution in his "Further Reminiscences," published in 1913, Hyndman says that, in 1889 there was —

"An active rivalry, not to say antagonism, between the S.D.F. and the Socialist League similar to that which existed in France between the Marxists and the Possibilists."

Hyndman's suggestion is that the S.D.F. was Marxist and revolutionary, and the Socialist League Possibilist and Reformist. But Hyndman knew, when he penned this suggestion, that the Socialist League was not organized to be less advanced, but to be more advanced than the S.D.F. It was essentially a propagandist organization. To compare Morris's Commonwealth with Hyndman's *Justice* would be to clinch this truism.

I do not pretend to draw any great distinction between the Marxists and the Possibilists, because the Marxists do not ground themselves on the philosophy of Marx, but on his intrigues and ambitions which finally betrayed Social Revolutionary aspiration to parliamentary compromise.

Morris learned to despise palliators and parliamentarism during his membership of the League. He agreed, in this, with the consistent teaching of Marx 1848 to 1871 and opposed no less the consistent example of Marx from 1871 to 1883. On his return to the S.D.F., Morris compromised alike in his contempt for palliators and his opposition to parliamentarism. And so proud was *Justice*,

the S.D.F. organ, of Morris's revisionism, that, in 1913, it reprinted from its columns of 1894, "Wat Tyler's" interview with him, affirming this sorry retrogression. At Morris's blessing of its palliatives and eulogy of the ballot-box *Justice* rejoices! Yet Hyndman would lead his readers to believe that the *Socialist League* was an Anti-Marxist organization because it stood for Possibilism. It may have been Anti-Marxist in some senses but it was certainly also an Anti-Possibilist, that is, a true revolutionary Socialist organization. Hyndman's placing shows how history is written. Well! Well!!

Morris went back to the parliamentary party, a broken propagandist. But he does not live as a parliamentarian. Ramsay MacDonald cannot quote him as a parliamentarism. Morris lives for his revolutionary outlook. He survives for his belief in the social revolution, for his caustic censures of parliamentarism. Remove Morris's opposition to parliamentarism and you kill his work, you stifle his genius, you trample down his vision and his every achievement as a pioneer. Morris lives in Socialist history as an Anti-Parliamentarian.

Today, when certain "Socialist" adventurers are telling us that Socialism is a purely secondary matter; if one can master the message of Morris, it is to realize that Socialism not only does matter, but that it is *the reality*; that our lives are the *reality*; and that Socialism against the war, Socialism against mere pacifism even, Socialism against capitalism, is the message.

What we need today is to be a little more exact, a little more determined. We can be true to Socialism of William Morris only by taking a grand conception of the reality and necessity of the Social Revolution.

Morris died in 1896. A few years have elapsed since that time. But we do not seem to be making much progress. What we want now is not the idealist but the MAN. Morris is dead. Though he does not live, his expression of the tendencies of a certain period of British history, and his bringing together of ideas from different epochs in society, will inspire others to live.