

THE NEW PARTY.

(Signed: Henry George. July 30, 1887)

Another correspondent asks me to define my position with relation to socialism. I have already done so at some length in that chapter of my book "Protection or Free Trade?" which is entitled "Free Trade and Socialism," and in a note to which I say;

"The term 'socialism' is used so loosely that it is hard to attach to it a definite meaning. I myself am classed as a socialist by those who denounce socialism, while those who profess themselves socialists declare me not to be one. For my own part I neither claim nor repudiate the name, and realizing as I do the correlative truth of both principles can no more call myself an individualist or a socialist than one who considers the forces by which the planets are held to their orbits could call himself a centrifugalist or a centripetalist. The German socialism of the school of Marx (of which the leading representative in England is Mr. H.M. Hyndman, and the best exposition in America has been given by Mr. Laurence Gronlund), seems to me a high-purposed but incoherent mixture of truth and fallacy, the defects of which may be summed up in its want of radicalism - that is to say, of going to the root."

The cardinal defect of socialism of the German school is in its failure to make a clear distinction between the primary factor of production, land, and the derivative factor, capital - a confusion largely due to the use of a terminology singularly lacking in any approach to scientific precision, and to the ignoring of that power of co-ordination and adjustment which comes from the free play of individual interests, and is to the social organism what the unconscious functions are to the human organism. Confusing land with

capital, these socialists imagine that it is as necessary, in order to prevent the robbery of labor, to do away with the private ownership of capital as to do away with the private ownership of land; and failing to recognize the primary cause of the helplessness of the mere laborer, where land is monopolized, and the co-ordination in production and justice in distribution that would result from really free competition, they imagine the evil lies in the wage system, and that competition must be abolished by committing to organized society - virtually the government - the direction of both production and distribution, in order to prevent waste and secure to each the fair reward of his labor. Socialism is not akin to anarchism, as so many who know nothing of either seem to suppose. It is its antipode. The socialist, as the term is commonly used to denote German or state socialist, would, to secure the proper direction of industry and the just distribution of its fruits, commit its control to government; the philosophic anarchist, seeing the abuses to which government is liable, would do away with government altogether, and trust everything to the co-ordination of individual impulses and needs. Both make a like mistake in seizing on one side of the truth and ignoring its correlative.

There is this truth - and it is a very important one - in socialism, that as civilization advances the functions which pass into the proper sphere of governmental control become more and more numerous, as we see in the case of the railroad, the telegraph, and the supplying of gas, water, etc., but this is all the more reason why we should be careful to guard against governmental interference with what can safely be left to individual action. In some things our existing system is too socialistic and in others too anarchistic.

The proper line between governmental control and individualism is that where free competition fails to secure liberty of action and freedom of development. The great thing which we should aim to secure is freedom - that full freedom of each which is bounded by the equal freedom of others.

If it were absolutely necessary to make a choice between full state socialism and anarchism, I for one would be inclined to choose anarchism, preferring no government at all, bad and inconvenient as that might be, to a government which should essay to control and direct everything. And I imagine that this would be the choice of the great majority of the American people, for individualism is strongly rooted in all the habits of thought of the peoples of English speech, and we seem to lack the capacity for governmental direction and administration that has been developed on the continent. This is the reason why socialism of the German school can never make the headway here that it has on the continent of Europe. It is, in fact, the product of a state of society in which people have become largely used to governmental supervision and direction, and are accustomed to look to government as a sort of special providence.

But in the meantime there is no reason why those who entertain such views as I do should not work harmoniously with socialists of the German school as long as we go together, or why we should be perpetually accentuating our differences. The ultimate aims of socialism are high and noble. They seek to obtain for society that abolition of poverty for which we would strive. Any dispute as to means may well be postponed until it is necessary to raise it. I and my friend both wish to reach the Pacific ocean. I think we shall reach it at San Francisco; he is firmly of the opinion that it will be necessary to keep on until we get to China. So long as we are willing to travel westward in the same car, we can well postpone disputes