

## COMMUNISM

BY SMITH W. CARPENTER

THOSE of us who remember back to pre-war days may recall the time when Communism had a faint aroma of Heaven. It was the life lead by the apostolic Christians, and the final coming of Christ would be heralded by a millennial period that could be cast in no other mould. While it was a visionary, impracticable, impossible sort of life, totally unsuited to human nature; still it was imaginable, and seemed to lead up naturally to a contemplation of celestial things. Now communism is something malign and hellish. Of course, the change has been wrought by the Russian experiment, but how and why?

If you will recall old memories, socialism did not enjoy the beatific connotation of communism; yet the ultimate ideals of each were so nearly identical that it would not pay to distinguish them. Socialism is a program for achieving communism. Socialism emphasizes the immediate things to do; in other words it translates communism from the academic to the practical, and thus interferes with the political status; hence socialism was anathema; it could not be otherwise. Bolshevism is extreme Marxian Socialism, but its aim is that of all socialism, to set up communism. That we should center our rage, in this later day, upon bolshevism and communism is natural, but it is unjust to socialism.

We are inconsistent too in venting our wrath against communism, for there is no communism in Russia. What Russia is suffering from is an unintelligent and unsuccessful attempt to set up communism. Russia is in the hands of a small group of Marxian fanatics, men who are personally honest and capable—according to any save the highest standards—but men whom we should rather compare with monks than with statesmen. Review your Hypatia with a view of comparing Lenine and his followers with Cyril and his mob. The repression of the Czarist regime shut off independ-

ent thinkers from a normal development of their powers; it shut them into obscure corners where they met only their own kind. Stewing there in their own broth, without perspective, and without an opportunity to get a line on their own philosophy through even its most elementary application to actual conditions, they developed all of bitterness there was in it. Such environment must necessarily have evolved a psychology akin to that which renunciation of the world, meditation, and introspection evolved in the monks that thronged the ruins along the Nile. As the teachings of Christ were to them, so were the teachings of Marx to the monks of socialism. To the latter, however, we must accord the greater consistency; their program bears no such angle of departure from the teachings of their master as did the program of Cyril. Hence, the condemnation which their results merit is justly visited upon Marxianism, while the Christians of Alexandria must personally bear their own.

Under our distinguishment it was communism rather than socialism that Spencer had in mind when he gave warning that it would be the world's destiny. The Russian experiment does not prove Spencer wrong, but it should relieve any apprehension lest socialism be the path of destiny. Spencer's theory was that communism marks an evolutionary epoch toward which nature is driving us. If that be true then assuredly there is another way of achieving it; nature's processes are buttressed too strongly for the failure of a bunch of "sooners" to cut any figure in results. Besides, nature is not accustomed to be aided, let alone to be guided by the wisdom of man. If it be written in the Book of Fate that this old world is to be run on a communistic basis, no Bolshevik blundering will turn us back. Let us then consider what other paths may lead to that same objective,—but first, what is that objective?

Whatever else the communistic state may be, it is big business raised to the *nth* power. In the thing of our dreams there is a complete identification of self and state; so that with no abatement of self interest everybody, in simple good faith, diligently works for the common weal, knowing that everybody else is so working, and that the distributive share of each will therefore be much greater than the average could possibly achieve working for himself. We would liken it to a great trust, perfectly organized, perfectly controlled, with the human element fully co-ordinated; so that every operative is rendering close to one hundred per cent efficiency. The communistic state is so stupendous that probably nobody can fully visualize it. Our own government is so enormous that one of our best-sellers is a story of Uncle Sam at work—a plain, unexaggerated

tale of our governmental machinery that proves more thrilling than a novel. Yet, that is capitalistic government, and, according to Bolshevik tell, the most reactionary and individualistic of all the great governments of the earth.

Far as we are from the communistic state, our governmental machinery is so complicated that it could not exist were it not for what government has learned from big business. That the government is a dull scholar, and has not profited as it might from the business example, is not material; big business it is that has made big government possible. Now the thing that we are talking about, the communistic state, is big government developed and perfected to its ultimate. Is it then not fair to infer that the same masters and the same principles that developed the big state out of the little state are our best recourse in carrying on that work to its ultimate perfection? Remember that what we are now we are by virtue of business, little and big. There is no generic distinction between little business and big business. Between the business conducted by the child that sells to its mother the eggs of their one hen, and the business of the biggest trust that the sun shines upon is only a varietal variation, spanned by a chain of business evolution whose adjacent links differ only microscopically. To look forward we doubt not that business will continue that same natural course throughout its entire journey toward ultimate perfection. Government too has progressed from the infinitely small to its present greatness by a chain of microscopic variation. Is it fair to assume that we are at the end of that chain? Is there not, on the other hand, every fair inference of nature's design that we should continue as we are, going on and on indefinitely toward, even though doomed never to achieve, ultimate perfection in the communistic state?

Such is the history of big business, and such is the history of big government. If there be an end it is away over the horizon, far beyond our ken. Every expert in every line of business management will assure you that we are but taking our first steps in scientific organization. They will tell you that it is surprising that half our business can run at all, so crude are its methods. If you inquire about government business, they will swear—language can not declare its shortcomings; yet the efficiency of public business has been tremendously increased in the past two decades; never has there been a time that so justified optimism as the present. All of this progress and infinitely more is comprehended within the communistic state of our dreams; yet all of that was but a part of what the fanatics of Bolshevism undertook to accomplish at a stroke, in

defiance of natural law, and with the most backward race of Europe.

It is hard to reconcile such a hum-drum capitalistic objective as the perfecting of the petty details of business administration, with the bright phantasmagora of our dreams. Why, all of that was to arise out of noble emotions! If you will conduct a little research on the subject of noble emotions in the business world, you will find them rather uniformly about two jumps ahead of the sheriff. Indeed, emotions of any kind are totally out of place on the business plane. Whatever doubts our Reverend brothers may have of the law of the survival of the fittest, they have got to admit that it works in business. The life of business is profits; not any business organization can possibly survive unless it yields profits. Emotional motivation disregards profits, and is therefore unfitted to survive.

The only motive that is worth a whoop in the business world is intelligent self-interest. Intelligent self-interest differs from that self-interest which we do not dignify with an adjective, in the quality of long-headedness. Selfishness is short-sighted and grasping; it clutches the immediate dollar and is willing to surrender no part of it. Intelligent self-interest asks for but a fractional penny out of each dollar, but it asks for it out of all the dollars there are. To further that end it is ready to render the greatest possible amount of service in return. Thus, intelligent self-interest, when it is sufficiently intelligent, achieves a result, regularly and as a part of a settled business policy, much the same as that aimed at by noble emotion.

The business of business is the perfecting of its own processes. As they are perfected, waste is eliminated, risks are reduced, and reserves pile up. A business so conducted can not help but grow. One of the big wastes, probably the biggest, occurs in the human element. Right now a business is doing well that gets more than sixty per cent efficiency out of its employees. The great work of the business executive is to release that other forty per cent of human energy. It is now definitely known that it can not be taken by force, it can only be coaxed out of men. That means that operatives must find joy in their work; they must have an adequate beneficial interest in it, and feel for their job all the keen interest of one who owns his own business. That is one of the results that Lenin endeavored to achieve out of hand; it is an essential part of the communistic state, but it is also the hard condition that capitalism is now wrestling with. Capitalism has no universal solvent, but it is nibbling at it, and little by little it is getting away with it.

The trust has come to stay; it is a necessity; it is one of the things that makes America glorious. Were our trusts all busted we would rank as a second or third class power. Our trusts have chiefly spread out horizontally, following the ramifications of a single business. But another principle is at work: it is found necessary to follow materials back to the mine, the forest, and the soil; to own them from the source, and to perform all the mesne operations essential to fit them for the central purpose of the trust. It is also found necessary to further manufacture or refine its own products, fitting them for the use of the ultimate consumer. There is no limit to this sort of expansion; transportation must be controlled or co-ordinated, and so too must banking. Although the proudest development of business organization is a pigmy in comparison with the communistic state, it is surely big enough to give us the line, to point the direction of our progress.

Yes, I admit that there is something a bit sinister about this swallowing up of little business by big; something mighty ominous in the power that such a combination gives to a few, but the longer you study it the more apparent it becomes that Nature looked ahead and provided against all of that. The inseparable condition of growth is service. The word of the Master has been heard by the corporation: "He that would be great among you, let him be the servant of all." The ultimate of greatness can be achieved only by a service that will include the equitable distribution of the benefits of industry between labor, capital, and consumer. You can not make it too strong; in just that ratio in which service is rendered does growth become possible. Combination is the law of progress; the reactionary is he who would return to old competitive methods. I do not revile the reactionaries—for the most part mislabeled progressives—for their trust-busting pleasantries have but served as a brake. We are going strong; better limit the speed than go in the ditch.

But, says one, the communistic state is a proletarian institution. No; it is not. The communistic state, if there is ever to be one, will be no class institution; it will be for everybody; it will be a gradual achievement, the product of the best there is of our combined genius. Furthermore, it will be worked out under the laws of human nature as they exist at the time, not according to the notions of them who pose as wiser than God himself; and that means that unless human nature changes a whole lot faster than we have any right to assume that it will, that the communistic state will include special advantages for them who furnish the brains.

There is no doubt but that the share paid to capital and to brains will be less in the future than it has been in the past. There will be less melon cutting, and what there is will be done under the lime-light; that means that each must justify his share in the sight of his neighbors, his friends, and of the public. Besides the business of merging and financing great combinations is already becoming standardized, and reduced to the basis of a service—to be compensated by a small toll out of many dollars. Even now the curve of the melon crop is not so vertical as it was a while ago. To secure the best energy and the best brains so much can be paid as to defeat its very purpose. But so long as brains control—barring change of human nature, they will have some form of preference. When they cease to control a new glacial period might as well start in.

But, you insist, the emphasis of the communistic state is upon service, while the emphasis of business is upon profits. Possibly that distinction should now be set up; but business is still young and the communistic state far off. Long before we acquire that beatific status there will be little left of that distinguishment. Not only will the emphasis of business continue to shift more and more to service, but the idea of profit will enter more and more into government. One of the great handicaps to be overcome in efficiently organizing the business of government is lack of the plumb line of profits. But it is not an impossible thing to set a money value upon all the services rendered by the departments of government; the services of health department, education, forestry, railroad commission, etc., can all be weighed against a dollar valuation; not an arbitrary guess, but a carefully studied out estimate.

You still object that the benefits of capitalism accrue unduly to capital. But have you taken into account the democratizing of capital? Every revolution has admitted to the ranks of the privileged a new segment of the disinherited, but never have all of any community been able to get into the dress parade. When you consider the countless small revolutionary movements that have been won by the toilers in the recent past, it would seem both reasonable and expeditious to continue that same movement a while longer. So many of the disinherited have been recently taken in that labor is split in two divisions: the aristocrats and the proletarians. The tide is setting so strong in that direction that, barring a counter-revolutionary movement, it will not be long until all who are morally fit will have come out of the proletarian ranks and joined the aristocrats. And the proletarians, too, are on the way.

If you still insist that there should be broader opportunity for the disinherited, I reply that there is. This is the day of the small investor. The best inheritance that we got out of the war was the thrift campaign. You will notice that it hardly slackened when the war was over. Why? Because of the intelligent self-interest of men of big affairs. The more money a man has the more he borrows, that is the rule of business. Nobody but a financier can fully appreciate the difference between doing business in a country where everybody has money for investment, and a country where the money is all in a few hands. Well distributed funds are not panicky or temperamental; they are dependable, and good for every substantial interest of the community. The American scale of living has so advanced that everybody with regular employment can save if he has sufficient self-control and interest in his own true welfare. Were everybody to do his reasonable best, within three generations there would not be a family without a substantial reserve, an investment stake on the side of capital. Everything is shaping up in favor of that end: one can buy into the concern that he works for; he can buy into the public utilities that supply his own needs, or into the great substantial concerns of his town that he has every opportunity to know about. Of course, to buy into anything requires self-denial, frugality, and virtue. That is a hard road, but is it too hard? Is it not worth while? Remember, that it is a road that has not always been open, and that it is a special privilege to travel it; besides it is under improvement.

Of course, this is a pitifully poor answer to one who believes in a bolshevik short-cut. It is the same old road that was traversed by the founders of America, of whose virtues we love to boast. Is nature a profiteer to demand such a price for financial independence? Remember that financial independence is only another name for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, for which the Fathers deemed nothing too great to give in exchange. Big business is helping—all that its self-interest is intelligent enough to permit—to make the way of the small investor as pleasant as possible. The plunderers who are out for the small investors bank-roll represent neither business nor capital.

Maybe there will come a time when we can successfully do without money which is one of the hopes that the Bolshevists hold out; but instead of nobody having money, the plan of capitalism is for everybody to have money; for everybody to have a proprietary interest in this thing called America; not to live like parasites upon the land, but to be of the land, to own it, to have a concern on both sides

of the pay-roll. The ideal of the able managers of our great corporations is to have their stock widely distributed in the hands of customers and patrons, and of employees. That is a capitalistic ideal, an ideal that is being continually more and more realized. Could it be perfectly realized, and were the corporation big enough, it would in itself almost constitute the communistic state.

To recapitulate: there are two manifest tendencies at work, tendencies which express the highest ideals of intelligent self-interest: the one toward organization and system, with all that implies of broad foundation, of human service, and assured profits; the other toward thrift and democratization of capital. Both are evolutionary developments of modern business, promoted and officered by the self-seeking, long-headed men of big affairs. Could each be advanced to ultimate perfection—voilà communism! But they can't. Nothing human can ever be made perfect; but if we can avoid war and internal strife, the day will come when we will have a first-class imitation.