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EDITORIAL

THE CATHOLIC UNION AND TIMES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the city of Buffalo there is published a weekly newspaper called the *Catholic Union and Times*. In its issue of May 1st there appears an address entitled “The Evils of Socialism,” which was delivered by a non-Catholic and lawyer, Wallace Thayer, before the Buffalo Labor Lyceum. The *Catholic Union and Times* commends this address to its readers as being “in line with the Catholic position on this grave subject, as set forth by Pope Leo, in his great encyclical on Socialism.”

Aside from the characteristic aptitude of the *Catholic Union and Times* in turning to its own use a non-Catholic force, which at other times its own church condemns as pernicious to the spread of true doctrine, the publication of the address is interesting and timely. Pretending to be conceived and delivered in a scientific spirit, it is based on ignorance and misrepresentation. As such it is an imposition upon the intelligence of its readers and illustrates to what means the *Catholic Union and Times* will descend in its efforts to throttle Socialism in behalf of Capitalism.

The address points out that the evils of Socialism are two: the destruction of private property and individual liberty. With the first there goes the destruction of the incentive to all progress, “men will not work without reward,” etc.; with the second there will come compulsory regulation of conduct, State control, etc., ad nauseam.

The presentation of these two evils are best epitomized in the lecturer’s belief of what Socialism is. “I understand it to be the destruction, by one blow, root and branch, of the slow growth extending backward to the infancy of the race, of the system of private property and individual enterprise: the annihilation of the right of the individual to have for his own that which his own brain and hand have made, to carry on what lawful business he pleases, and to exchange his labor and his products freely. I understand that you would substitute for this right of individual business the ownership

of all capital and all property and the carrying on of all industry, all manufacture and all trade by the State exclusively.

“I believe your proposed revolution is in violation of the fundamental laws of nature and of our being, is criminally immoral and economically unsound.”

The first proposition in this declaration of belief is wrong in every respect. It is not a fact that Socialism seeks to destroy private property at one blow: it seeks to socialize that portion of it known as capital through the evolution of the capitalist system, as will be shown later. Nor is it a fact that private property, as defined by the lecturer, dates from the infancy of the race: private property dates from the inception of civilization: THE BRIEFEST PERIOD IN THE GROWTH OF THE RACE.

Prior to civilization there was the period of barbarism. Prior to barbarism there was savagery. Both of these periods are assumed to have covered 19-20ths of the life of the race. In both barbarism and savagery there was no private property; there was communistic and semi-communistic property, personal, individual property was incidental and scarcely known. Yet there was progress; progress relatively greater, far greater, than was achieved in civilization, and without which civilization—the much vaunted civilization of private property—would have been impossible, just as impossible as the dome of St. Peter’s would have been without the rough stone foundation and the support of the marble pillar architecture of which it forms the splendid superstructure.

Let the social student take down his Lewis H. Morgan from his book shelves. Let him turn to page 41 of *Ancient Society* by that world-famed and renowned ethnologist. There he will read that “Savagery was the formative period of the human race. Commencing at zero in knowledge and experience, without fire, without articulate speech and without arts, our savage progenitors fought the great battle, first for existence, and for progress, until they secured safety from ferocious animals and permanent subsistence.” Is there anywhere an epic more heroic and sublime than that? For two-thirds of the life of the race, Morgan estimates, man, savage man, struggled without the reward of property, to secure safety from beasts and reliable food supplies. But man, still without property, didn’t stop there. Unlike our Catholic and non-Catholic friends of Buffalo, they were not troubled by any “fundamental laws of human nature” or anything else. They left that for ecclesiastics who are not savages. They proceeded to

develop articulate speech and the bow and arrow. They evolved through three forms of family and organized the gentes, the first form of society worthy of the name. Proceeding on to barbarism, they signalized that period by four events of pre-eminent importance—to use the language of Morgan—viz., the domestication of animals, the discovery of the cereals, the use of stone in architecture, and the invention of the process of smelting ore. This period at its lowest status also produced “the confederacy, based upon gentes, phratries and tribes under government of a council of chiefs which gave a more highly organized state of society than before that had been known.” “The village stockade for defense; tribal games; elemental worship, with a vague recognition of the Great Spirit; cannibalism in time of war; and lastly, the art of pottery,” also belong to this lower status of barbarism.

The middle status produced “the process of making bronze; flocks and herds of domestic animals; communal houses with walls of adobe, and of dressed stone laid in courses with mortar and sand; cyclopean walls; lake dwellings constructed on piles; the knowledge of native metals, with the use of charcoal and the crucible for melting them; the copper axe and chisel; the shuttle and embryo loom; cultivation by irrigation, causeways and reservoirs and irrigating canals; paved roads; osier suspension bridges; personal gods, with a priesthood distinguished by a costume, and organized in a heirarchy; human sacrifices; military democracies of the Aztec type; woven fabrics of cotton and other vegetable fibre in the western hemisphere, and of wool and flax in the eastern; ornamental pottery; the sword of wood, with the edges pointed with flints; polished flint and stone implements; a knowledge of cotton and flax; and the domestic animals.” These achievements are stupendous and wonderful; yet seeing that they are done without private property or the commendation of the *Catholic Union and Times*, they must be criminally unsound, repugnant to our being, and in violation of the “fundamental laws of human nature,” as expounded by Buffalo lawyers.

But there are still the inventions, discoveries and institutions of the Upper Status of Barbarism to be enumerated. These include “the invention of poetry (what! poetry without private property! is it possible!); the ancient mythology in its elaborate forms, with the Olympic divinities; temple architecture; the knowledge of the cereals excepting maize and cultivated plants, with field agriculture; cities encompassed with walls of

stone, with battlements, towers and gates; the use of marble in architecture; shipbuilding with planks and probably the use of nails; the wagon and the chariot; metallic plate armor; the copper-pointed spear and the embossed shield; the iron sword; the manufacture of wine, probably; the mechanical powers excepting the screw; the potters' wheel and the hand-mill for grinding grain; woven fabrics of linen and woolen from the loom; the iron axe and spade; the iron hatchet and adz; the hammer and the anvil; the bellows and the forge; and the side-hill furnace for smelting iron ore. Along with the above named acquisitions must be" included "the monogamian family; military democracies of the heroic age; the latter phase of the organization into gentes, phratries and tribes; the agora or popular assembly, probably; A KNOWLEDGE OF INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY IN HOUSES AND LANDS, and the advanced form of municipal life in fortified cities."¹

Thus, at the end of barbarism, and the beginning of civilization, the race first begins to have a knowledge of individual property in houses and land. Individual property and individual enterprise in the capitalist sense, are unknown. It still required that stretch of human existence known as Feudalism to develop them.

"The slow growth extending back to the infancy of the race, of the system of private property and individual enterprise" forsooth!

And it is with such mental pabulum as that that the *Catholic Union and Times*, through the generosity of a non-Catholic lawyer, seeks to stuff its readers! And such is the historical balderdash that the *Catholic Union and Times*, pronounces "in line with the Catholic position on this grave subject"!

More anon!

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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¹ [De Leon's emphasis.]