

## **Declaration of Interdependence (1895)**

When, in the course of human progression, the despoiled class of wealth producers becomes fully conscious of its rights and determined to take them, a decent respect to the judgment of posterity requires that it should declare the causes which impel it to change the social order.

More truly can we say of our plutocracy than our forefathers did of the British crown that "its history is one of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these States." Let the facts speak.

The foundation of the Union was co-eval with the birth of the modern system of production by machinery. No sooner was the Federal Constitution adopted than the spirit of capitalism began to manifest its absorbing tendency and corrupting influence. Every new invention was looked upon, not as a means of promoting the welfare of all, but as an instrument of private profit. Every tract of fertile land belonging to the States was appropriated by individuals, regardless of the rights of future generations. Every public franchise of any value was given away to "enterprising" persons and companies.

Thus was already formed in those early days, a privileged class, whose wealth was derived from the labor of others; this growing monopoly of the means of production and exchange, by placing a steadily increasing number of disinherited workers in its dependence for employment, strengthened its hold upon the public powers, which it used more and more unscrupulously for its own aggrandizement.

Even such a public calamity as war was turned by that selfish and unpatriotic class to its own enrichment. By their labor alone the working people not only provided their own sustenance but supplied the means of supporting armies, recruited from their own ranks. Yet, from the fact that the instruments of production were the private property of individuals, the product itself was also the property of those individuals, who stood between the people and their Government. For that part of the product which was required to carry on the war, the nation, therefore, became indebted to capitalists, who availed themselves of the public needs to exact exorbitant prices, further increased by the depreciation of the currency or of the interest-bearing bonds in which the war supplies were paid for, and which would some day have to be redeemed at par. In other words, during and after a war the capitalist class cost to the country several times as much as the enemy.

So did the promises and purposes of the Revolution immediately prove abortive. While the fundamental law declared that the Union was formed "to establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty," free scope was given to an economic system replete with injustice, pregnant with the seeds of domestic strife, destructive of every true element of happiness, and fatally tending to class tyranny.

Under that system men, proclaimed free and equal, were soon made to realize that they were only labor power in human form, to be sold in the market for what it could fetch, and to be consumed in the production of wealth for the exclusive benefit of those who already had wealth.

Under that system the value of a man, and, therefore, his remuneration, were not to be measured by the extent to which his industry and intelligence benefited his fellows. They were to be gauged by the necessities of his competitors on the "labor market"; so that, as the competition increased, the tendency of his wages was constantly downward, until it reached the minimum required to keep alive his flesh and bone machine while it was hired to an employer, who thus became the absolute owner of the net product, or, "surplus value," created by that human machine.

Under that system the toiling masses, hungry and despised, turned the wilderness into a garden, the stones, the clay, the trees into resplendent cities, the ore and the coal into new organs of motion, through which human strength, speed and skill were multiplied a thousandfold, the lightning itself into an obedient messenger; they built factories, ships, docks and warehouses; constructed railroads, bridged rivers and pierced mountains; then descended into their nameless graves, leaving all in the hands of their despoilers, to further oppress and degrade the inheritors of their misery.

Under this system society, so called, became a worse pandemonium than it had ever been. Each looked upon his neighbor as a legitimate prey or a dangerous antagonist. The laborer viewed with dismay the appearance of another laborer, while the employer of both plotted the ruin of a rival employer. And this horrible struggle for life among the weak, for dominion among the powerful, ever more intense as the means of life became greater and as the dominion of Man over Nature grew more extensive, was glorified by sophists as the providential law of human progress!

From this state of anarchy emerged at last the plutocracy of our day. How and at what cost we shall now see.

For a century or more anarchy reigned supreme in all the branches of production. At times, without definite or approximate knowledge of actual conditions, but stimulated by a reckless desire for gain, every "captain of industry" went on "rushing business" to the utmost capacity of his means and credit, until the market was "overstocked"; that is, until he found by the event what he might have learned before by a timely use of common sense, namely:

1. That since, under the wage system the people can only buy back a portion of their product, the profit-making class must depend on it self alone for the consumption of the remainder.

2. That in so far, then, as the overproduction, so called, consists of such necessities as the wage-earning masses require, it must either be sold at a great sacrifice or remain in store until the workers engaged in the production of things exclusively used by the said profit-making class can gradually absorb it.

3. That in the meantime the production of necessities must stop and the adventurous "captains" who have incurred obligations beyond their means are necessarily bankrupted.

4. That a large number of the very people who purchase those necessities from retailers are consequently thrown out of employment, and that the current stock of those traders is thereby converted into an overstock, with the inevitable result of widespread failure, reaching at last the industries affected to the production of capitalist commodities.

And then must the strange spectacle be afforded, of a whole people— with the exception of a few drones for whom the sun of prosperity never sets— reduced to the utmost destitution in the midst of the plenty of their own creation; men, women and children starving, apparently, because there is too much wheat and meat; ragged and shoeless, apparently because there is too much clothing and footwear; idle, and therefore miserable, actually because there stands between them and the idle machine, as also between them and busy Nature, a paper wall of private ownership, stamped "Sacred" by the hand of Imposture.

At such times those social functions only which have escaped individual covetousness— those public services like the postoffice, education, and other departments of national, State and municipal administration which have remained socialized— are entirely free from the general paralysis, in so far at least as their working force is involved. And although tainted with the corruption that capitalism imparts to government, they shine in the night of economic chaos as vivid illustrations of individual security and public benefit in social co-operation. By the contrast of their normal activity with the intermittent palsy of all the capitalized organs of the social body, they plainly show that

individual suffering is the natural punishment inflicted upon men for their disregard of the fundamental law of social existence— the law of interdependence— or solidarity.

Every such crisis reduced the number of capitalistic combatants and left the survivors stronger than formerly. It also left the wage-workers weaker in proportion. . . .

But throughout the civilized world the wage workers are asserting their interdependence— the natural dependence of every man upon his fellows, of every nation upon all other nations; and under the banner of International Socialism millions of them are now marching to the conquest of the public powers.

They recognize that the social body is an organism, and, as such, is subject in its life, health and development to the general law which governs organic nature; that the more highly it is developed, the more interdependent are all its members; that the very extent of this mutual dependence of parts determines the amount of freedom and the degree of perfection with which they respectively perform their natural functions, ever so diverse, yet all tending usefully and harmoniously to the common end.

They realize also that the capitalist is no more a legitimate member of the social organism than a parasite in the human body is a necessary part of the organ upon which it feeds, and upon the proper working of which all the other organs depend for support and vigor. And they are determined to expel him.

The class struggle has reached its climax. With the triumph of the united toilers over their combined despoilers will end class privilege and class rule.

Americans, fall into line! Onward to the Co-operative Commonwealth!

To the industrious the tools of industry; to the laborer the fruits of his labor; to mankind the earth!