

*Critique of the Gotha Programme<sup>1</sup>*  
*Marginal Notes on the Programme of the*  
*German Workers' Party*

I

(1) 'Labour is the source of all wealth and culture, *and since* it is only possible to have useful labour in and through society, all members of society have an equal right to the undiminished return from labour.' *First part of the paragraph:* 'Labour is the source of all wealth and all culture.'

Labour is *not the source* of all wealth. *Nature* is just as much the source of use-values (and what else is material wealth?) as labour, which is itself only the expression of a natural power, human labour power.

This line can be found in any children's primer and is correct in so far as the *implication* is that labour requires certain means and materials. However a socialist programme cannot allow a bourgeois phrase like this to conceal the very *circumstances* that give it some sense. Only in so far as man acts as the proprietor of nature, the primary source of all the means and materials of labour, and treats nature as his own from the outset, does his labour become the source of use-values, and hence of wealth. The bourgeoisie have

<sup>1</sup> In these manuscript notes Marx quotes from the draft programme for the proposed Socialist Workers' Party of Germany. Quotations from this programme, as transcribed by Marx, appear in boldface type, with his own emphasis in *boldface italic*. The congress at Gotha united the Social Democratic Workers' party ('Eisenachers', after their founding congress at Eisenach in 1869, also known as 'honest' social-democrats) with the General German Workers' Union ('Lassalleans', after their founder Ferdinand Lassalle, who led it from 1863 to his death in 1864). Marx refers generically to the Workers' Party in anticipation of the union.

very good reason to credit labour with *a supernatural generative power*; for it follows directly from the fact that nature is a precondition for labour, that a man who has no property other than his labour power must in all cultural and social circumstances be a slave to those who have become the owners of labour's material prerequisites. He can only work by permission, and hence live by permission.

Let us leave the sentence as it runs, or rather limps. What sort of conclusion is supposed to follow? Obviously this:

'Since labour is the source of all wealth, no one in society can appropriate wealth except as the product of labour. Therefore anyone who does not work lives off the labour of others and also acquires his culture at the expense of those who work.'

Instead of this, the words *and since* link up a second proposition, in order to draw a conclusion from it, not from the first one.

*Second part of the paragraph.*

'It is only possible to have useful labour in and through society.'

According to the first proposition, labour was the source of all wealth and culture, hence no society at all was possible without labour. Now we hear the opposite, that no 'useful' labour is possible without society.

One could just as well have said that only in society can useless labour or even socially destructive labour become a regular occupation, that only in society can people live in idleness, etc. etc., in short one could have copied down the whole of Rousseau.

And what is 'useful' labour? Surely only the labour which produces the intended useful effect. A savage – and man was a savage after he had ceased being an ape – who kills an animal with a stone, gathers fruit, etc., is performing 'useful' labour.

*Thirdly: the conclusion:* 'And since it is only possible to have useful labour in and through society – all members of society have an equal right to the undiminished return from labour.'

A fine conclusion! If useful labour is only possible in society and by means of society, then the return from labour belongs to society – and the individual worker only gets what is left over after preserving society, [which is] the 'prerequisite' for labour.

In fact, this proposition has been useful to *apologists for the prevailing conditions in society* at any given time. First come the claims of the government and everything that goes along with it, since it is the agency in society maintaining social order; then come the claims of property owners of different types, because the different types of private property are the foundation of society, etc. We see how hollow phrases such as these can be turned and twisted at will.

The first and second parts of the paragraph have some kind of intelligible connection only in this sense:

‘Only as social labour’, or what is the same thing, ‘in and by means of society’, ‘does labour become the source of wealth and cultural advantages’.

This proposition is indisputably correct, for although isolated labour (given the material conditions) can create use values, it can create neither wealth nor cultural advantages.

But this proposition is also equally indisputable:

‘To the degree that labour develops in society, and in that way becomes the source of wealth and cultural advantages, poverty and destitution also develop amongst the workers, but wealth and cultural advantages [develop] amongst the non-workers.’

This has been the rule in all history up to now. Instead of generalising about ‘labour’ and ‘society’, this was the place to demonstrate how in present-day capitalist society the material etc. conditions have finally been created that will render workers capable of lifting this historical curse, and compel them to do it.

In fact, the whole paragraph, defective in both style and content, is only there to inscribe Lassalle’s catch-phrase ‘undiminished return from labour’ as a motto on the party banner. Later I shall come back to the ‘return from labour’, ‘equal right’ etc., since the same subjects recur in somewhat different form.

(2) **‘In modern society the means of labour are a monopoly of the capitalist class; the resulting dependency of the working class is the cause of poverty and servitude in whatever form.’**

This sentence, borrowed from the rules of the International [Working-Men’s Association], is falsified in the ‘improved’ version here.

In modern society, the means of labour are a monopoly of land-owners (the monopoly of landed property is the very basis of the

monopoly of capital) *and* of the capitalists. In the relevant passage the rule of the International mentions neither the one nor the other class of monopolists. It speaks of a ‘*monopoly of the means of labour, i.e. of the sources of life*’; the addition of ‘sources of life’ is sufficient indication that land is included in the means of labour.

The amendment was made because Lassalle, for reasons now generally known, tackled *only* the capitalist class, not the owners of landed property. In England the capitalist is usually not the owner of the land on which his factory stands.

(3) **‘The emancipation of labour requires the elevation of the means of labour to the common stock of society, the co-operative management of all labour, with a just distribution of the return.’**

‘Elevation of the means of labour to the common stock!’ This is better rendered as their ‘transformation into common stock’. But this is only in passing.

What is the ‘*return from labour*’? The product of labour or its value? And in the latter case, is it the total value of the product, or only the value newly added by labour to the value of the means of production as they are consumed?

‘Return from labour’ is a loose notion used by Lassalle instead of precise economic concepts.

What is a ‘just’ distribution?

Don’t the bourgeoisie claim that the present distribution is ‘just’? And on the basis of the present mode of production, isn’t it in fact the only ‘just’ distribution? Are economic relations regulated by legal concepts, or on the contrary, don’t legal relations arise from economic ones? Don’t sectarian socialists have the most varied ideas about ‘just’ distribution?

To find out what the phrase ‘just distribution’ was supposed to mean in this context, we must take the first paragraph together with this one. The latter presupposes a society in which ‘the means of labour are common property and all labour is co-operatively managed’, and from the first paragraph we gather that ‘all members of society have an equal right to the undiminished return from labour’.

‘All members of society’? Even the non-workers? Then where’s ‘the undiminished return from labour’? Only the working members of society? Then where’s ‘the equal right’ of all members of society?

'All members of society' and 'equal right' are obviously just figures of speech. The nub of the matter is that in this communist society every worker has to get his 'undiminished return from labour', as Lassalle would have it.

Let's start by taking the term 'return from labour' to mean 'product of labour', so the co-operative return from labour is the *total social product*.

Now to be deducted from this:

*First:* funds to replace the means of production [as it is] used up;

*Secondly:* additional resources to expand production;

*Thirdly:* a reserve or insurance against accidents, disruptions due to natural catastrophe etc.

These deductions against the 'undiminished return from labour' are an economic necessity, and the amounts will be determined by the materials and resources available, and in part by actuarial reckoning, but they are in no way calculable through principles of justice.

Then there's the remaining part of the total product, destined to serve as the means of consumption.

But before this gets down to individual portions, there are further outgoings:

*First: the general administrative costs not directly linked to production.*

In comparison with present-day society, this part will be very significantly restricted from the outset, and it will diminish proportionately as the new society develops.

*Secondly: whatever is dedicated to the collective satisfaction of needs,* like schools, health services etc.

In comparison with present-day society this part will expand significantly from the outset, and will grow proportionately as the new society develops.

*Thirdly: resources for those incapable of work* etc., shorthand for what today comprises so-called official poor relief.

Only now do we come to 'distribution', which is the only thing considered in this narrow-minded programme, influenced as it is by Lassalleans, to wit, the part of the means of consumption which is distributed amongst the individual producers in the co-operative.

The 'undiminished return from labour' has already been secretly converted into the 'diminished [return from labour]', although what is extracted from the producer in his role as private individual

comes back to him directly or indirectly in his role as member of society.

The general term 'return from labour' now vanishes, just the way the term 'undiminished return from labour' disappeared.

Within a co-operatively organised society based on common ownership in the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products; nor does the labour expended on the products appear any more *as the value* of these products, one of the material properties that they possess, because now in contrast to capitalist society, the labour of individuals will no longer be a constituent part of the total labour in a roundabout way, but will be part of it directly. The term 'return from labour', which is useless even today on account of its ambiguity, thus loses all semblance of meaning.

Here we are dealing with a communist society, not as it *has developed* from first principles, but on the contrary, just as it *emerges* from capitalist society, hence in every respect – economically, morally, intellectually – as it comes forth from the womb, it is stamped with the birthmarks of the old society.

The individual producer retains proportionately, after deductions, exactly what he put into it. What he has put into it is a quantity of his individual labour. E.g. the working day for society comprises the sum of individual hours of work. The individual labour time of the individual producer is the part of the working day in society contributed by him, his share of it. He gets from society a receipt that he has contributed such and such an amount of labour (after a deduction of labour for common reserves) and withdraws from society's stores of the means of consumption an equal amount costed in labour terms. The same quantity of labour he puts into society in one form comes back to him in another.

Obviously the principle here is the same as the one that applies in the exchange of commodities, so far as the exchange is one of equal values. The content and form have changed, because under the altered conditions no one can contribute anything except his own labour, and nothing can become a person's property except the individual means of consumption. But as far as the distribution of the means of consumption amongst individual producers is concerned, the operative principle is the same as under the exchange of equivalent values: a given amount of labour in one form is exchanged for an equal amount in another form.

Thus *equal right* is still – at least in principle – a *bourgeois right*, although principle and practice are no longer at loggerheads, and anyway in commodity exchange the exchange of equivalents exists only *on average*, not in each individual case.

In spite of this advance, this *equal right* is continually beset with bourgeois limitations. The right of the producers is *proportional* to the labour they contribute; the equality consists in measurement in terms of a common standard, labour. But one person is physically or mentally superior to another, and hence contributes more work in the same time or can work longer; and labour, in order to serve as a measure, must be defined by its duration or intensity; otherwise it would cease to be standard. This equal right is an unequal right for unequal labour. It acknowledges no distinctions of class, because everyone is a worker just like everyone else, but it tacitly recognises unequal individual talent and hence productivity in labour as natural privileges. *Therefore in content this is a right to inequality, like all rights.* By its nature a right can only consist in the application of a common standard; but unequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal) are only commensurable in terms of a common standard, if they are brought within a common purview, grasped only in terms of a *specific* aspect, e.g. considered in a given case *only as workers*, and nothing else about them is taken into account, all else being disregarded.

Furthermore: one worker is married, another not; one has more children than another, etc. etc. Given equal productivity and hence an equal share in the socialised resources for consumption, one worker will in fact receive more than another, be richer than another. To avoid all these faults, rights would have to be unequal, instead of equal.

But these faults are unavoidable in the first phase of communist society when it has just emerged from capitalist society after a long and painful birth. Rights can never be higher than the economic form of society and the cultural development which is conditioned by it.

In a higher phase of communist society, after the subjection of individuals to the division of labour, and thereby the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has disappeared; after labour has become not merely a means to live but the foremost need in life; after the multifarious development of individuals has grown

along with their productive powers, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly – only then can the limited horizon of bourgeois right be wholly transcended, and society can inscribe on its banner: from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!

I have engaged at length with the ‘undiminished return’ from labour on the one hand, and with ‘equal right’ [and] ‘just distribution’ on the other, in order to show how outrageous it is that, on the one hand, people want to make party dogma out of conceptions which made sense at a certain point, but are now a junkheap of phrases, [and] on the other hand, people twist the realistic outlook, adopted by the party with much effort and now well rooted there, into an ideology of rights-and-so-forth, just the arrant nonsense common amongst democrats and French socialists.

Quite apart from the analysis so far, it was an overall mistake to make an issue of so-called *distribution* and to make it the focus of attention.

At any given time the distribution of the means of consumption is only a characteristic feature of the very distribution of the conditions for production; the latter distribution is a consequence of the mode of production itself. The capitalist mode of production, for instance, is founded on the fact that the material conditions for production are assigned to non-workers in the form of property in capital and land, whilst most people own only the condition of production that is personal, labour power. If the elements of production are distributed in this way, then the present distribution of the means of consumption arises by itself. If the material conditions for production are the co-operative property of the workers themselves, then a distribution of the means of consumption arises that is different from today’s. Vulgar socialism has taken from bourgeois economists the analysis and theorisation of distribution as independent of the mode of production (and some of the democrats got this in turn from the socialists), hence they represent socialism as turning mainly on questions of distribution. Given that the real relationship was clarified long ago, why are we going backwards again?

(4) ‘The emancipation of labour must be the work of the labouring class, against which all other classes are *only a reactionary mass.*’

The first clause is from the introduction to the rules of the International, only 'improved'. Originally it read: 'The emancipation of the labouring class must be the work of the labourers themselves'; here by contrast 'the labouring class' is to emancipate – what? – 'labour'. Make sense of that, if you can.

In compensation, the contrasting clause is a quote from Lassalle in purest form.

'against which (the labouring class) all other classes are *only a reactionary mass.*'

The Communist Manifesto says:

'Of all the classes which today oppose the bourgeoisie, the only *truly revolutionary class* is the proletariat. The other classes come to the fore and then decline to extinction with large-scale industry, whereas the proletariat is its particular product.'

The bourgeoisie is understood here to be a revolutionary class – the bringer of large-scale industry – contrasting with the feudal estates and lower middle classes, which want to retain the whole social hierarchy, the product of outdated modes of production. Hence they do not form merely a reactionary mass *together with the bourgeoisie.*

In contrast to the bourgeoisie, the proletariat is indeed revolutionary, because having arisen from large-scale industry, it is striving to strip production of its capitalist character, which the bourgeoisie seeks to perpetuate. But the [Communist] Manifesto adds: that the 'lower middle classes . . . (become) revolutionary . . . because they recognise that they face a descent into the proletariat'.

From this point of view it is therefore nonsense once again [to say] that they [the lower middle classes], 'together with the bourgeoisie' and the feudal estates to boot, form 'only a reactionary mass', in contrast to the labouring class.

At the last elections, did we say to the artisans, small manufacturers, etc. and *peasants*: are you, along with the bourgeoisie and feudal estates, just a reactionary mass, compared to us?

Lassalle knew the Communist Manifesto off by heart, just as his converts know his sacred writings. Therefore if he has falsified it so crudely, it can only be to gloss over his alliance with absolutist and feudal opponents of the bourgeoisie.

In the above paragraph, this pearl of wisdom is dredged up

without any connection to the bastardised quote from the rules of the International. Thus it is simply an impertinence here, and anyway sure to please Herr Bismarck, one of those cheap jibes in which the Marat of Berlin [Wilhelm Hasselmann, editor of the Lassallean newspaper] specialises.

(5) 'At first the working class struggles for its emancipation within *the bounds of the present-day national state*, well aware that the necessary result of its efforts will be the international brotherhood of all nations, which is common to the workers of civilised countries.'

Contrary to the Communist Manifesto and to all earlier forms of socialism, Lassalle approached the workers' movement from the narrowest national perspective. Here they toe his line – and this after the work of the International!

It is self-evident that to be capable of struggle at all, the working class must organise itself at home *as a class*, and that its own country must be the immediate arena for struggle. To that extent, the class struggle is national, not in content, but as the Communist Manifesto says, 'in form'.

But the 'bounds of the present-day national state', e.g. the German empire, is itself 'within the bounds of the world market' economically, and 'within the bounds of the state-system' politically. Any good businessman knows that German trade is at the same time foreign trade, and that the great strength of Herr Bismarck is in just this kind of *international* politics.

And what does the internationalism of the German Workers' Party come down to? To the knowledge that the result of their efforts 'will be the *international brotherhood of all nations*' – a phrase borrowed from the bourgeois League of Peace and Freedom, intended to pass as an equivalent to the international brotherhood of the working classes in their united struggle against the ruling classes and their governments. *About the international activities* of the German working class there is not one word! And this is how it is supposed to challenge its own bourgeoisie, and the international intrigues of Herr Bismarck, when the bourgeoisie of all other countries is already in league against it!

In fact the commitment to internationalism in the programme is *infinitely* less than that of even the free-traders. They also claim that the result of their efforts will be 'the international brotherhood of

all nations'. But they are also *doing* something to internationalise trade, and are in no way satisfied in the knowledge – that all nations are engaged in commerce at home.

The international activity of the working classes does not depend in any way on the existence of the '*International Working-Men's Association*'. This was only the first attempt at creating a central agency for that activity; an attempt that was an abiding success owing to the impetus it gave, but which could no longer be continued in its *initial historical form* after the fall of the Paris Commune [in 1871].

Bismarck's [newspaper] *Norddeutsche [Allgemeine Zeitung]* was absolutely right when it declared to its master's satisfaction that the German Workers' Party had forsworn internationalism in its new programme.

## II

'Starting from these fundamental principles, the German Workers' Party will strive, using all legal means, for a free state – and – a socialist society: the abolition of the wage system *along with the iron law of wages* – and – of exploitation in every form; the elimination of all social and political inequality.'

The 'free' state will be dealt with later.

So in future the German Workers' Party will have to believe in Lassalle's 'iron law of wages'! So as not to lose this [phrase], they talk nonsense about 'abolition of the wage system (this should read: system of wage-labour) *along with the iron law of wages*'. If I abolish wage-labour, then I naturally abolish its laws as well, whether they are 'iron' or jelly. Lassalle's attack on wage-labour turns entirely on this so-called law. In order to prove that Lassalle's sect has conquered, the 'wage system' must be abolished '*along with the iron law of wages*', and not without it.

It is well known that nothing in the 'iron law of wages' is Lassalle's except the word 'iron', pinched from Goethe's 'great, eternal, iron laws'. The word *iron* is a sign by which true believers recognise each other. But if I take the law with Lassalle's stamp on it, and hence in his sense, then I must also take it with his justification. And what is that? As demonstrated by [Friedrich] Lange

[the neo-Kantian philosopher] shortly after Lassalle's death: the Malthusian theory of population growth (professed by Lange himself). But if this theory is right, then I can *not* abolish the law, even if I abolish wage-labour a hundred times over, because the law governs not only the system of wage labour, but *every* social system. Basing themselves on this, the economists have been proving for fifty years and more that socialism cannot abolish *naturally occurring* poverty, but only *generalise* it, distributing it equally across the whole range of society!

But all this is not the main thing. *Quite apart* from the *false* Lassallean formulation of the law, the really outrageous backsliding consists in the following:

Since Lassalle's death [in 1864], the scientific view has made headway in *our* party:

that *wage-labour* is not what it *appears* to be, namely *the price of labour* in relation to its *value*, but only a disguised form for the *price of labour power in relation to its value*. With that, the whole preceding bourgeois conception of wage-labour was thrown onto the rubbish heap once and for all, including all the criticisms previously directed against it, and it has been made clear that the wage-labourer is only allowed to work for his own livelihood, i.e. *to live*, by working for a certain amount of time for free for the capitalist (and thus for his fellow consumers of surplus value as well); that the whole capitalist system of production turns on prolonging this free labour by extending the working day or by developing productivity, increasing the intensity of labour power, etc.; that the system of wage-labour is therefore a system of slavery, and indeed a kind of slavery that becomes proportionately harder as the social productive powers of labour are developed, whether the worker is now well paid or badly off. And after this insight had gained more and more ground in our party, they turn back to Lassalle's dogma, although they must surely know that Lassalle *knew nothing* about what wages really are, but rather mistook appearance for reality, following in the wake of the bourgeois economists.

It is as if there were some slaves who finally got out from under the mystery of slavery and started up a rebellion, but one slave, a prisoner to old-fashioned ideas, wrote in their manifesto: slavery must be abolished because board and lodging for slaves in a system of slavery can never go over a certain minimal ceiling!

This insight was spreading throughout the membership, and the mere fact that the representatives of our party were capable of perpetrating such a monstrous attack on it, just goes to show how they set to work composing this compromise programme with real criminal levity and total lack of conscience!

In place of the ill-defined concluding phrase of the paragraph, 'the elimination of all social and political inequality', they should have said that when class divisions are abolished, then all the corresponding social and political inequality will disappear.

### III

*To facilitate the resolution of the social question, the German Workers' Party demands state aid for setting up producers' co-operatives under the democratic control of the working people. Producers' co-operatives in industry and agriculture will be brought to life to such an extent that from them will develop the socialistic organisation of the whole of labour.'*

After Lassalle's 'iron law of wages', we have faith healing! This is 'facilitated' in the worthiest way! In place of the existing class struggle, we get journalistic phrases – 'the social question', the 'resolution' of which is 'facilitated'. Instead of arising from the revolutionary transformation of society, 'the socialistic organisation of the whole of labour' 'will develop' from 'state aid' given to producers' co-operatives, which it, not the workers, 'brings to life'. The idea that one can build a new society with state loans just as easily as a new railway is a fantasy worthy of Lassalle!

The last remnant of shame made them put the 'state aid' 'under the democratic control of the working people'.

First, the majority of 'the working people' in Germany are peasants and not proletarians.

Secondly, 'democratic' means 'ruled by the people'. But what is 'control by the working people that is ruled by the people' supposed to mean? And particularly in the case of the working people who put these demands to the state in full knowledge that they neither rule nor are ready to!

It would be superfluous here to go into the criticisms of [Philippe] Buchez's [Christian socialist] plan, which was concocted under [King] Louis Philippe in *opposition* to the French socialists

and then taken up by the reactionary workers of the [magazine] *Atelier*. The worst offence lies not in writing this particular miracle cure into their programme, but retreating generally from the standpoint of a class movement to mere sectarianism.

That the workers want to create the conditions for co-operative production in all society, and hence first of all on a national scale, means only that they are working for the overthrow of present-day conditions of production, and has nothing in common with establishing co-operative societies with state aid! But as far as present-day co-operative societies are concerned, they are *only* of value if they are independent creations of the workers and not creatures of the government or the bourgeoisie.

### IV

I'll come now to the bit about democracy.

(A) 'The state's foundation in freedom.'

According to section II, the German Workers' Party is striving above all for 'a free state'.

A free state – what's that?

It is not in any way a goal for workers, released from the limitations of servility, to make the state 'free'. In the German empire the 'state' is almost as 'free' as it is in Russia. Freedom consists in transforming the state from an agency superior to society into one thoroughly subordinated to it, and today, too, state forms are more or less free to the extent that they limit the 'freedom of the state'.

The German Workers' Party – at least if it adopts this programme – reveals that its socialism is not even skin-deep, for instead of treating existing society (and this holds good for any future one) as the 'basis' of the existing state (or a future state, for a future society), it treats the state rather as an independent entity having its own '*foundations in ideas, morality and freedom*'.

And what a crazy abuse of the words 'present-day state' [and] 'present-day society' [are] in the programme, and the still crazier misunderstanding it has made of the state to which its demands are directed!

'Present-day society' is capitalist society, which exists in all civilised countries, more or less free of admixtures of medievalism, more or less modified through the historical development of each

country, more or less advanced. By contrast, the 'present-day state' changes with each country's borders. It is different in the Prusso-German empire from the way it is in Switzerland, different in England from the way it is in the United States. 'The present-day state' is thus a fiction.

Nonetheless the different states of different civilised countries, in spite of their various differences in form, all have something in common, namely that they are based on modern bourgeois society, just that it is only more or less capitalistically developed. Hence they also have certain essential characteristics in common. In this sense it is possible to talk of the 'present-day type of state', but in the future by contrast, its current basis, present-day bourgeois society, will have died off.

The question then arises: what transformation will the state undergo in a communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain there analogous to the functions of the current state? This question can only be answered scientifically, and one gets not a flea-hop closer to the problem by conjoining the words 'people' and 'state' a thousand times.

Between capitalist and communist society there is a period of revolutionary transformation of one into the other. There is also correspondingly a period of political transition, in which the state can be nothing else but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.

But the programme does not deal with this, nor with the type of state in a future communist society.

Its political demands are nothing but the democratic litanies well known the world over: universal manhood suffrage, legislative initiative, civil rights, citizen militia, etc. They are but echoes of the bourgeois People's Party, [and] the League of Peace and Freedom.

So far as these have not been blown up into fantasies, they are public demands which have already been *realised*. Only the state to which they belong is not in the borders of the German Empire but in Switzerland, the United States, etc. A 'future state' of this kind is a 'present-day state', but outside 'the bounds' of the German empire.

But something has been forgotten. Since the German Worker's Party expressly declares that it would work within 'the present-day national state', hence its own state the Prusso-German empire – else most of its demands would be meaningless, since you only

demand what you haven't got yet – it should not have let the main point slip, that all these charming little trifles depend on the recognition of the so-called sovereignty of the people, since they are only appropriate in a *democratic republic*.

Because they lack courage – and wisely so, since the circumstances demand caution – to demand a democratic republic, as did the political programmes of the French workers under [King] Louis Philippe and [President then Emperor] Louis Napoleon – they should not have rushed to the subterfuge, which is neither 'honest' [as the Social Democratic Workers' Party was nicknamed] nor decent, of demanding things which only make sense in a democratic republic from a state that is nothing but a military despotism, embellished with parliamentary niceties, under the influence of the bourgeoisie but mixed up at the same time with elements of feudalism, bureaucratically structured and shored up by the police – and yet over and above all this to assure this state that they imagine they can impose these demands on it 'through legal means'!

Even the most vulgar democrats, who see the millennium in the democratic republic and have no inkling that it is in this last form of the state for bourgeois society that the class struggle will definitively be fought out – even they stand head and shoulders above a kind of democracy that keeps within the bounds of what is allowed by the police and disallowed by logic.

What they mean by 'state' is the governmental machine, or the state in so far as it constitutes an organisation in and of itself, distinguished from society through the division of labour, [and] this is revealed in the words:

'The German Workers' Party demands a unified progressive income tax etc. *as the economic basis of the state.*'

Taxation is the economic basis of the governmental machine and of nothing else. In the state of the future, already existing in Switzerland, this demand is nearly fulfilled. An income tax presupposes different sources of income for the different classes in society, hence capitalist society. Thus it is no surprise that the Liverpool financial reformers – a bourgeois group headed by Gladstone's brother [Robertson] – are making the same demand as the [Gotha] Programme.

(B) 'The German Workers' Party demands as the intellectual and ethical basis of the state:



(1) Universal and *equal elementary education by the state*. Universal compulsory attendance. Free tuition.'

*Equal elementary education?* What can these words mean? Do they think that in present-day society (and this is all they are dealing with here) education can be *equal* for all classes? Or are they also demanding that the upper classes should be reduced compulsorily to the modicum of education – the elementary school – which is all that is compatible with the economic relationships of wage-labourers and peasants alike?

'Universal compulsory attendance. Free tuition.' The first of these is in existence even in Germany, the second in Switzerland and the United States for elementary school. If in some states even 'higher' education is also 'free', this only means in practice that the upper classes can cover their costs of education from general tax receipts. And by the way this applies to the 'free administration of justice' demanded under A §5. Criminal justice is freely available everywhere; civil justice is almost exclusively concerned with property disputes, therefore almost exclusively it is the possessing classes that are affected. Should their lawsuits be funded from the public purse?

The paragraph on schools ought at least to have demanded technical schools (theoretical and practical) in conjunction with elementary schools.

'*Elementary education by the state*' is wholly objectionable. A general law defining the funding for schools, the qualifications of teachers, the subjects of instruction, etc., and monitoring these legal requirements through a state inspectorate as is done in the United States, is something quite different from appointing the state as people's educator! Instead church and state alike should be excluded from any influence on schools. In the Prusso-German empire in particular (and there's no help here from the lame excuse that we're dealing with a 'future state'; we have already seen what the matter is with that) the state could do with the contrary, some very rough-and-ready instruction from the people.

Despite the ring of democracy about it, the whole [Gotha] Programme is infested through and through with the Lassalleian sect's servile belief in the state, or what is no better, by a faith in miracles of democracy, or rather it is a compromise between these two types of faith in miracles, both equally removed from socialism.

(2) '*Freedom for scientific inquiry*', it says in the Prussian constitution. Then why [do we have it] here?

'*Freedom of conscience!*' If they wanted to remind liberalism of its old catch-phrases during this time of *Kulturkampf* [Bismarck's liberalising campaign against conservative Catholicism], then they should surely have done it in this form: everyone should be able to attend to their religious needs, just like their bodily ones, without the police sticking their noses in. But at this point the Workers' Party ought to have expressed its view that bourgeois 'freedom of conscience' is nothing other than the toleration of all possible types of *religious unfreedom of conscience*, and that on the contrary it strives for a conscience free from religious mystification. But they choose not to overstep the 'bourgeois' stage.

I have now got to the end, for the appendix is not a *characteristic* part of the [Gotha] Programme. So I can express myself very briefly here.

(2) [*sic*] '*Normal working day*.' In no other country has the workers' party limited itself to such an ill-defined demand, instead of fixing the length of the working day considered normal in the given circumstances.

(3) '*Limitations on female and child labour*.'

The standardisation of the working day must already include limitations on female labour so far as this refers to the length of the working day, breaks, etc.; otherwise this can only mean the exclusion of female labour from branches of labour which are particularly injurious to the female body or are morally objectionable to the female sex. If that is what they meant, then they should have said so.

'*Prohibition of child labour!*' It was absolutely essential to state the *age limit* here.

A *general prohibition* on child labour is incompatible with the existence of large-scale industry and hence an empty, pious wish.

Its implementation – if possible – would be reactionary, because with strict regulation of working hours for different age groups and other safety measures for the protection of children, an early combination of productive labour with instruction is one of the most powerful means for transforming present-day society.

(4) '*State supervision of industry in the factory, workplace and home*.'

Contrary to the position in the Prusso-German state, there should have been a demand that inspectors be removable only after due process; that every worker can take them to court for dereliction of duty; that they must belong to the medical profession.

(5) '*Regulation of prison labour.*'

A mean little demand in a workers' programme. In any case they should have made it clear that there is no intention to make common criminals competitive [as workers] by treating them like animals and in particular to deprive them of their only means of improvement, productive labour. That was the least we could expect from socialists.

(6) '*An effective law of liability.*'

What they mean by an 'effective' law of liability remains to be stated.

It might be noted in passing that with respect to the normal working day the section of the factory legislation that deals with health and safety regulations and accident prevention, etc. has been overlooked. The law of liability would only come into effect when these regulations were infringed.

In short, this appendix is also distinguished by slovenly editing.

Dixi et salvavi animam meam. [I have spoken and saved my soul; Ezekiel 3:18-19.]

## 'Notes' on Adolph Wagner<sup>1</sup>

(1) Herr Wagner's point of view is the '*socio-legal point of view*'. On that [he] finds himself in '*accord with [the political economists] [Johann Karl] Rodbertus, [Friedrich Albert] Lange, and [Albert Friedrich Eberhard] Schäffle*'. For the '*main, fundamental points*' he refers to *Rodbertus and Schäffle*. Herr Wagner himself speaks of *piracy* as '*illegal acquisition*' by *whole peoples*, and says that it is only robbery, if '*a true international law [jus gentium]*' is assumed to exist'.

Above all he is seeking the '*conditions of economic life in a community*', and he '*defines, according to the same conditions, the sphere of the economic freedom of the individual*'.

'The "drive for satisfaction" . . . does not and should not operate, as a *pure force of nature*; rather it stands, like any human drive, under the guidance of reason and conscience. Any act resulting from it is consequently an *accountable* act and is always liable to a *moral judgement*, but that is itself, to be sure (!), subject to *historical change*.'

<sup>1</sup> In this text Marx quotes extensively from Adolph Wagner, *Allgemeine oder theoretische Volkswirtschaftslehre [General or Theoretical Economics]*, Erster Theil, *Grundlegung [Foundations]*, 2nd edn, Leipzig and Heidelberg, 1879; issued as vol. 1 of Karl Heinrich Rau, *Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie [Political Economy]*, new edn, ed. Adolph Wagner and Erwin Nasse. These quotations are enclosed in single quotes, whether in Marx's own text or set off as a separate paragraph. Marx used extensive emphasis, represented below with *italic* type. Words in neither English nor German, which were italicised in the original texts for emphasis, appear as foreign words in roman type for emphasis. Marx's insertions are in parentheses. Editorial insertions are in square brackets. The text here has been slightly adapted and simplified compared with the 1975 edition.