Annotations to Karl Marx’s Critique of the Gotha Programme

Hans G. Ehrbar

August 26, 2010
Contents

1 Marx to Wilhelm Bracke 2

2 Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers’ Party 8
   2.1 I ................................................................. 8
   2.2 II ............................................................... 55
   2.3 III .............................................................. 61
   2.4 [IV] ........................................................... 65


This text was first published by Engels in Die Neue Zeit, Bd. 1, No. 18, 1890–91. The present edition follows Marx’s manuscript. Passages which were left out and replaced by dots in Engels’s 1891 edition are enclosed here in angle brackets.

This text is also discussed in http://marxmyths.org/paresh-chattopadhyay/article.htm.
1 Marx to Wilhelm Bracke

London, 5 May 1875
Dear Bracke,

When you have read the following critical marginal notes on the Unity Programme, would you be so good as to send them on to Geib and Auer, Bebel and Liebknecht for examination. I am exceedingly busy and have to overstep by far the limit of work allowed me by the doctors. Hence it was anything but a “pleasure” to write such a
lengthy creed. It was, however, necessary so that the steps to be taken by me later on would not be misinterpreted by our friends in the Party for whom this communication is intended.


After the Unity Congress has been held, Engels and I will publish a short statement to the effect that our position is altogether remote from the said programme of principle and that we have nothing to do with it.

This is indispensable because the opinion—the entirely erroneous opinion—is held abroad and assiduously nurtured by enemies of the Party that we secretly guide from here the movement of the so-called Eisenach Party [German Social-Democratic

Nach abgehaltenem Koalitions-kongreß werden Engels und ich nämlich eine kurze Erklärung veröffentlichen, des Inhalts, daß wir besagtem Prinzipienprogramm durchaus fernstehen und nichts damit zu tun haben.

Es ist dies unerläßlich, da man im Ausland die von Parteifeinden sorgsam genährte Ansicht — die durchaus irrige Ansicht — hegt, daß wir die Bewegung der sog. Eisenacher Partei insgeheim von hier aus lenken. Noch in einer jüngst erschiene-
Workers Party]. In a Russian book [Statism and Anarchy] that has recently appeared, Bakunin still makes me responsible, for example, (not only) for all the programmes, etc., of that party (but even for every step taken by Liebknecht from the day of his cooperation with the People’s Party).

Apart from this, it is my duty not to give recognition, even by diplomatic silence, to what in my opinion is a thoroughly objectionable programme that demoralises the Party.

Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes. If, therefore, it was not possible—and the conditions of the item did not permit it—to go beyond the Eisenach programme, one should simply...
ply have concluded an agreement for action against the common enemy. But by drawing up a programme of principles (instead of postponing this until it has been prepared for by a considerable period of common activity) one sets up before the whole world landmarks by which it measures the level of the Party movement.

The Lassallean leaders came because circumstances forced them to. If they had been told in advance that there would be haggling about principles, they would have had to be content with a programme of action or a plan of organisation for common action. Instead of this, one permits them to arrive armed with mandates, recognises these mandates on one’s part as binding, and thus

man einfach eine Übereinkunft für Aktionen gegen den gemeinsamen Feind abschließen sollen. Macht man aber Prinzipienprogramme (statt dies bis zur Zeit aufzuschieben, wo dergleichen durch längere gemeinsame Tätigkeit vorbereitet war), so errichtet man vor aller Welt Marksteine, an denen sie die Höhe der Parteibewegung mißt.

14:1 Die Chefs der Lassalleaner kamen, weil die Verhältnisse sie dazu zwangen. Hätte man ihnen von vornherein erklärt, man lasse sich auf keinen Prinzipien- schacher ein, so hätten sie sich mit einem Aktionsprogramm oder Organisationsplan zu gemeinschaftlicher Aktion begnügen müssen. Statt dessen erlaubt man ihnen, sich mit Mandaten bewaffnet einzustellen,
surrenders unconditionally to those who are themselves in need of help. To crown the whole business, they are holding a congress before the Congress of Compromise, while one’s own party is holding its congress post festum. (One had obviously had a desire to stifle all criticism and to give one’s own party no opportunity for reflection.) One knows that the mere fact of unification is satisfying to the workers, but it is a mistake to believe that this momentary success is not bought too dearly.

For the rest, the programme is no good, even apart from its sanctification of the Las- sallean articles of faith.

(I shall be sending you in the near fu-

and erkennt diese Mandate seinerseits als bindend an, ergibt sich also den Hilfsbedürftigen auf Gnade und Ungnade. Um der Sache die Krone aufzusetzen, halten sie wieder einen Kongreß vor dem Kompromißkon- greß, während die eigne Partei ihren Kon- greß post festum hält. (Man wollte offenbar alle Kritik eskamotieren und die eigne Par- tei nicht zum Nachdenken kommen lassen.) Man weiß, wie die bloße Tatsache der Verei- nigung die Arbeiter befriedigt, aber man irrt sich, wenn man glaubt, dieser augenblickli- che Erfolg sei nicht zu teuer erkauft.

14:2 Übrigens taugt das Programm nichts, auch abgesehen von der Heiligsprechung der Lassalleschen Glaubensartikel.

14:3 (Ich werde Ihnen in der nächsten
ture the last parts of the French edition of Capital. The printing was held up for a considerable time by a ban of the French Government. The thing will be ready this week or the beginning of next week. Have you received the previous six parts? Please let me have the address of Bernhard Becker, to whom I must also send the final parts.

The bookshop of the Volksstaat has peculiar ways of doing things. Up to this moment, for example, I have not been sent a single copy of the Cologne Communist Trial.

With best regards,

Yours, Karl Marx


14:5 Mit bestem Gruß

14:6 Ihr Karl Marx
Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers’ Party

2.1 I

1. “Labor is the source of wealth and all culture, and since useful labor is possible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labor belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society.”

15:1 1. „Die Arbeit ist die Quelle alles Reichtums und aller Kultur, und da nutzbringende Arbeit nur in der Gesellschaft und durch die Gesellschaft möglich ist, gehört der Ertrag der Arbeit unverkürzt, nach gleichem Rechte, allen Gesellschaftsgliedern.“
First part of the paragraph: “Labor is the source of all wealth and all culture.”

81:2 Labor is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use values (and it is surely of such that material wealth consists!) as labor, which itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature, human labor-power.

↓ A good way to criticize a wrong assertion is to specify the conditions under which it is correct:
The above phrase can be found in all children’s primers and is correct insofar as it is implied that labor is performed with the appurtenant subjects and instruments. But a socialist program cannot allow such bourgeois practices.

15:2 Erster Teil des Paragraphen: „Die Arbeit ist die Quelle alles Reichtums und aller Kultur.“

15:3 Die Arbeit ist nicht die Quelle alles Reichtums. Die Natur ist ebensosehr die Quelle der Gebrauchswerte (und aus solchen besteht doch wohl der sachliche Reichtum!) als die Arbeit, die selbst nur die Äußerung einer Naturkraft ist, der menschlichen Arbeitskraft.

Jene Phrase findet sich in allen Kinderbüchern und ist insofern richtig, als unterstellt wird, daß die Arbeit mit den dazugehörigen Gegenständen und Mitteln vorgeht. Ein sozialistisches Programm darf aber solchen...
bourgeois phrases to pass over in silence the conditions that alone give them meaning. And insofar as man from the beginning relates with nature, the primary source of all instruments and subjects of labor, as an owner, treats her as belonging to him, his labor becomes the source of use values, therefore also of wealth. The bourgeois have very good grounds for falsely ascribing supernatural creative power to labor; since precisely from the fact that labor depends on nature it follows that the man who possesses no other property than his labor power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of other men who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labor. He can only work with their per-

bürgerlichen Redensarten nicht erlauben, die Bedingungen zu verschweigen, die ihnen allein einen Sinn geben. Nur soweit der Mensch sich von vornherein als Eigentümer zur Natur, der ersten Quelle aller Arbeitsmittel und -gegenstände, verhält, sie als ihm gehörig behandelt, wird seine Arbeit Quelle von Gebrauchswerten, also auch von Reichtum. Die Bürger haben sehr gute Gründe, der Arbeit übernatürliche Schöpfungskraft anzudichten; denn gerade aus der Naturbedingtheit der Arbeit folgt, daß der Mensch, der kein andres Eigentum besitzt als seine Arbeitskraft, in allen Gesellschafts- und Kulturzuständen der Sklave der andern Menschen sein muß, die sich zu Eigentümern der gegenständlichen
mission, hence live only with their permission.

Let us now leave the sentence as it stands, or rather limps. What conclusion could one have expected? Obviously this:

“Since labor is the source of all wealth, no one in society can appropriate wealth except as the product of labor. Therefore, if he himself does not work, he lives by the labor of others and also acquires his culture at the expense of the labor of others.”

Instead of this, by means of the verbal rivet “and since,” a second sentence is attached in order to draw a conclusion from it

Arbeitsbedingungen gemacht haben. Er kann nur mit ihrer Erlaubnis arbeiten, also nur mit ihrer Erlaubnis leben.

16:1 Lassen wir jetzt den Satz, wie er geht und steht, oder vielmehr hinkt. Was hätte man als Schlußfolgerung erwartet? Offenbar dies:

16:2 „Da die Arbeit die Quelle alles Reichtums ist, kann auch in der Gesellschaft sich niemand Reichtum aneignen, außer als Produkt der Arbeit. Wenn er also nicht selbst arbeitet, lebt er von fremder Arbeit und eignet sich auch seine Kultur auf Kosten fremder Arbeit an.“

16:3 Statt dessen wird durch die Wortschraube „und da“ ein zweiter Satz angefügt, um aus ihm, nicht aus dem ersten,
Second part of the paragraph: “Useful labor is possible only in society and through society.”

According to the first sentence, labor was the source of all wealth and all culture; therefore no society is possible without labor. Now we learn, conversely, that no “useful” labor is possible without society.

This is a tautology. Of course society is presupposed for every production process, not only for useful labor. Marx brings this point home by saying that useless labor is even more socially conditioned:

One could just as well have said that only in society can useless and even socially harmful labor become a branch of gainful occupation, that only in society can one
live by being idle, etc., etc.—in short, once could just as well have copied the whole of Rousseau.

And what is “useful” labor? Surely only labor which produces the intended useful result. A savage—and man was a savage after he had ceased to be an ape—who kills an animal with a stone, who collects fruit, etc., performs “useful” labor.

Thirdly, the conclusion: “Since useful labor is possible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labor belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society.”

A fine conclusion! If useful labor is possible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labor belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society.


16:8 Drittens: Die Schlußfolgerung: „Und da nutzbringende Arbeit nur in der Gesellschaft und durch die Gesellschaft möglich ist — gehört der Ertrag der Arbeit unverkürzt, nach gleichem Rechte, allen Gesellschaftgliedern.“

16:9 Schöner Schluß! Wenn die nutzbrin-
sible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labor belong to society—and only so much therefrom accrues to the individual worker as is not required to maintain the “condition” of labor, society.

In fact, this proposition has at all times been made use of by the champions of the state of society prevailing at that time. First comes the claims of the government and everything that sticks to it, since it is the social organ for the maintenance of the social order; then comes the claims of the various kinds of private property, for the various kinds of private property are the foundations of society, etc. One sees that such
gende Arbeit nur in der Gesellschaft und durch die Gesellschaft möglich ist, gehört der Arbeitsertrag der Gesellschaft — und kommt dem einzelnen Arbeiter davon nur soviel zu, als nicht nötig ist, um die „Bedingung“ der Arbeit, die Gesellschaft, zu erhalten.

16:10 In der Tat ist dieser Satz auch zu allen Zeiten von den Vorfechtern des jedesmaligen Gesellschaftszustands geltend gemacht worden. Erst kommen die Ansprüche der Regierung mit allem, was daran klebt, denn sie ist das gesellschaftliche Organ zur Erhaltung der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung; dann kommen die Ansprüche der verschiedenen Sorten von Privateigentümern, denn die verschiedenen Sorten Privateigen-
hollow phrases can be twisted and turned as desired.

The first and second parts of the paragraph have some intelligible connection only if formulated as follows:

“Labor becomes the source of wealth and culture only as social labor” or, what is the same thing, “in and through society.”

This proposition is incontestably correct, for although isolated labor (its material conditions presupposed) can create use value, it can create neither wealth nor culture.

But equally incontestable is this other proposition:

tum sind die Grundlagen der Gesellschaft etc. Man sieht, man kann solche hohlen Phrasen drehn und wenden, wie man will.

17:1 Irgendwelchen verständigen Zusammenhang haben der erste und zweite Teil des Paragraphen nur in dieser Fassung:

17:2 „Quelle des Reichtums und der Kultur wird die Arbeit nur als gesellschaftliche Arbeit“ oder, was dasselbe ist, „in und durch die Gesellschaft“.

17:3 Dieser Satz ist unstreitig richtig, denn wenn die vereinzelte Arbeit (ihre sachlichen Bedingungen vorausgesetzt) auch Gebrauchswerte schaffen kann, kann sie weder Reichtum noch Kultur schaffen.

17:4 Aber ebenso unstreitig ist der andre Satz:
“In proportion as labor develops socially, and becomes thereby a source of wealth and culture, poverty and destitution develop among the workers, and wealth and culture among the nonworkers.”

This is the law of all history hitherto. What, therefore, had to be done here, instead of setting down general phrases about “labor” and “society”, was to prove concretely how in present capitalist society the material, etc., conditions have at last been created which enable and compel the workers to lift this social curse.

In fact, however, the whole paragraph, bungled in style and content, is only there in

17:5 „Im Maße, wie die Arbeit sich gesellschaftlich entwickelt und dadurch Quelle von Reichtum und Kultur wird, entwickeln sich Armut und Verwahrlosung auf seiten des Arbeiters, Reichtum und Kultur auf seiten des Nichtarbeiters.“

17:6 Dies ist das Gesetz der ganzen bisherigen Geschichte. Es war also, statt allgemeine Redensarten über „die Arbeit“ und „die Gesellschaft“ zu machen, hier bestimmt nachzuweisen, wie in der jetzigen kapitalistischen Gesellschaft endlich die materiellen etc. Bedingungen geschaffen sind, welche die Arbeiter befähigen und zwingen, jenen geschichtlichen Fluch zu brechen.

17:7 In der Tat ist aber der ganze, stilistisch und inhaltlich verfehlte Paragraph nur
2.1 I

In present-day society, the instruments of labor are the monopoly of the capitalist class; the resulting dependence of the working class is the cause of misery and servitude in all forms.

This sentence, borrowed from the Rules of the International, is, in this “improved” edition, incorrect.

In present-day society, the instruments of labor are the monopoly of the landowners...
(the monopoly of property in land is even the basis of the monopoly of capital) and the capitalists. In the corresponding passage, the Rules of the International do not mention either one or the other class of monopolists. They speak of the “monopoly of the means of labor, that is, the sources of life.” The addition, “sources of life,” makes it sufficiently clear that land is included in the instruments of labor.

The improvement was introduced because Lassalle, for reasons now generally known, attacked only the capitalist class and not the landowners. In England, the capitalist class is usually not even the owner of the land on which his factory stands.

The next passage from the Gotha Programme refers to a future socialist society:

3. “The emancipation of labor demands the promotion of the instruments of labor to the common property of society and the co-operative regulation of the total labor, with a fair distribution of the proceeds of labor.

Marx begins his comments about this passage with a small quibble about the wording:

“This Promotion of the instruments of labor to common property” ought obviously to read their “conversion into common property”; but this is only in passing.

After this, Marx raises three different criticisms of this section. (1) he questions the concept of “proceeds of labor,” (2) he questions the concept of a “fair” distribution in general and of Lassalle’s “undiminished labor-day” in particular; and (3) he notes that production, not distribution, should have been emphasized.

Regarding point (1) Marx remarks that the concept of “proceeds of labor” is ambiguous, and wonders which meaning applies here.
What are the “proceeds of labor”? The product of labor or its value? And in the latter case, is it the total value of the product, or only that part of the value which labor has newly added to the value of the means of production consumed?

18:3 Was ist „Arbeitsertrag“? Das Produkt der Arbeit oder sein Wert? Und im letzteren Fall, der Gesamtwert des Produkts oder nur der Wertteil, den die Arbeit dem Wert der aufgezehrten Produktionsmittel neu zugesetzt hat?

This ambiguity of the phrase is symptomatic: the phrase denotes a “loose preconception” (the German word “Vorstellung” almost means “imagination,”) i.e., it is a product of thinking before critical and analytical scrutiny is applied to ensure that this thinking indeed corresponds to reality.

“Proceeds of labor” is a loose preconception which Lassalle has substituted for determinate economic concepts.

18:4 „Arbeitsertrag“ ist eine lose Vorstellung, die Lassalle an die Stelle bestimmter ökonomischer Begriffe gesetzt hat.

The problem with this “loose conception” is that the intuitive appeal of an “undiminished distribution” of these proceeds to the producer will prove illusory once we make more precise what is meant by the ”proceeds of labor.” But before Marx can make this argument, he must go over to point (2) and explore what the Gotha programme proposes to do
with the proceeds of labor:

**What is a “fair” distribution?**

Marx’s definition of “fair” or “just” is: something that naturally corresponds to the present mode of production. This is explained, for instance, in the following passage from *Capital III*, [mecw37]339:3/0:

To speak here of natural justice, as Gilbart does (see note), is nonsense. The justice of the transactions between agents of production rests on the fact that these arise as natural consequences out of the production relationships. The juristic forms in which these economic transactions appear as wilful acts of the parties concerned, as expressions of their common will and as contracts that may be enforced by law against some individual party, cannot, being mere forms, determine this content. They merely express it. This

Mit Gilbart (siehe Note) von natürlicher Gerechtigkeit hier zu reden, ist Unsinn. Die Gerechtigkeit der Transaktionen, die zwischen den Produktionsagenten vorgehn, beruht darauf, daß diese Transaktionen aus den Produktionsverhältnissen als natürliche Konsequenz entspringen. Die juristischen Formen, worin diese ökonomischen Transaktionen als Willenshandlungen der Beteiligten, als Äußerungen ihres gemeinsamen Willens und als der Einzelpartei gegenüber von Staats wegen erzwingbare Kontrakte er-
content is just whenever it corresponds, is appropriate, to the mode of production. It is unjust whenever it contradicts that mode. Slavery on the basis of capitalist production is unjust; likewise fraud in the quality of commodities.

But here, in the Gotha Programme, Marx answers his first question, “what is a fair distribution?,” by asking two more questions. The first question counterposes to the Lassallean demand for a fair distribution the observation that capitalist distribution is often considered fair:

Do not the bourgeois assert that the present-day distribution is “fair”? 18:6 Behaupten die Bourgeois nicht, daß die heutige Verteilung „gerecht“ ist?

Furthermore, this is not just an empty assertion, but there is some justification to it:

And is it not, in fact, the only “fair” distribution?
2.1 Is distribution on the basis of the present-day mode of production?

Here the word “fair” is in quotation marks because the question what is fair cannot be decided in the abstract but depends on the mode of production. Marx’s next question makes this more explicit.

Are economic relations regulated by legal concepts, or do not, on the contrary, legal relations arise out of economic ones?

Marx clinches his point of the relativity of the concept of fairness with the observation that there is not only disagreement between pro-capitalists and pro-socialists about the concept of fairness, but even different socialists have different notions of fairness.

Have not also the socialist sectarians the most varied notions about “fair” distribution?

Since it can not be deduced from general principles what a fair distribution is, we need to investigate in every individual case what the speaker means when they talk about fairness.
Indeed, if we read the passage Marx is presently discussing, [mecw], together with the first passage which Marx had discussed, [mecw], we can infer what is considered to be fair in the present context:

To understand what is implied at the present occasion by the phrase “fair distribution,” we must take the first paragraph and this one together. The latter presupposes a society wherein “the instruments of labor are common property and the total labor is co-operatively regulated,” and from the first paragraph we learn that “the proceeds of labor belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society.”

This inference cannot be entirely smooth because the requirement spelled out in this first passage is contradictory. If the proceeds of labor belongs to every member of society, then it cannot flow back to the worker “undiminished,” but if it only belongs to the working...
members of society, then not everyone in society has an equal right to it.

“To all members of society”? To those who do not work as well? What remains then of the “undiminished” proceeds of labor? Only to those members of society who work? What remains then of the “equal right” of all members of society?

In order to resolve this contradiction, Marx assumes that part of the text was nothing but empty slogans and can be ignored. The emphasis in the Gotha programme is that every laborer should get an “undiminished” part of his labor. (Since capitalist exploitation is based on the workers’ wages being less than the value produced by the workers, this Lassallean approach seems to be a logical way to eliminate exploitation.)

But “all members of society” and “equal right” are obviously mere phrases. The kernel consists in this, that in this communist society every worker must receive the “undiminished” Lassallean “proceeds of labor.”
Now we are back to point (1) again, the discussion of what to understand under the “proceeds of labor”:

Let us take, first of all, the words “proceeds of labor” in the sense of the product of labor; then the co-operative proceeds of labor are the total social product.

Marx is apparently talking here about the gross national product: we will see that he subtracts from it the intermediate products used up, but not the depreciation allowance for fixed capital. Once we have defined in more detail what this social aggregate product is, we see that the intuitively appealing notion of an “undiminished distribution” of the proceeds of labor to the laborers does not hold up: this product has several components which cannot be distributed to the workers:

From this must now be subtracted:

Part of the product is needed to replace worn-out equipment:

First, cover for replacement of the means
of production used up.

- Part of the product is needed for new investment:
  
  *Second*, additional portion for expansion of production.

- Another part of the product must stand ready for the case of accidents or disasters.

  *Third*, reserve or insurance funds to provide against accidents, dislocations caused by natural calamities, etc.

  Marx uses the word “funds” here, i.e., there is some ambiguity whether he is talking about physical products or about purchasing power.

  These deductions cannot be determined by principles of fairness but follows from economic necessity. (So much for a “fair” distribution.)

  These deductions from the “undiminished” proceeds of labor are an economic necessity, and their magnitude is to be determined according to available means and forces, and partly by computation of prob-
abilities, but it is by no means possible to derive them from justice.

↑ All the deductions so far referred to parts of the social product whose physical form is not fit for individual consumption. ↓ But now let's look at that part which consists of means of consumption.

There remains the other part of the total product, intended to serve as means of consumption.

⇓ Again there are economic necessities which command the distribution of some of this to non-laborers:

Before this is divided among the individuals, there has to be deducted again, from it:

⇓ General costs of administration.

*First*, the general costs of administration not directly belonging to production.


19:7 Bevor es zur individuellen Teilung kommt, geht hiervon wieder ab:

19:8 Erstens: die allgemeine, nicht direkt zur Produktion gehörigen Verwaltungskosten.
Apparently Marx is thinking here that the main costs of this administration consists in
the salaries of the administrators. In capitalism, this part is inflated; under socialism it will be much lower.

This part will, from the outset, be very considerably restricted in comparison with present-day society, diminishing in proportion as the new society develops.

Secondly: means of social consumption, such as schools, hospitals, etc.

Second, that which is intended for the common satisfaction of needs, such as schools, health services, etc.

This part will grow considerably.

From the outset, this part grows considerably in comparison with present-day society, growing in proportion as the new society develops.

19:9 Dieser Teil wird von vornherein aufs bedeutendste beschränkt im Vergleich zur jetzigen Gesellschaft und vermindert sich im selben Maß, als die neue Gesellschaft sich entwickelt.

19:10 Zweitens: was zur gemeinschaftlichen Befriedigung von Bedürfnissen bestimmt ist, wie Schulen, Gesundheitsvorrichtungen etc.

19:11 Dieser Teil wächst von vornherein bedeutend im Vergleich zur jetzigen Gesellschaft und nimmt im selben Maß zu, wie die
ety develops.

A third part is funds for those unable to work (who, in capitalism, are condemned to poverty).

*Third, funds for those unable to work,* etc., in short, for what is included under so-called official poor relief today.

Again Marx speaks here of funds. *What is left after this must be distributed to the producers for their individual consumption.*

Only now do we come to the “distribution” which the program, under Lassallean influence, alone has in view in its narrow fashion—namely, to that part of the means of consumption which is divided among the individual producers of the co-operative society.

In the light of all these deductions, Marx calls Lassalle’s emphasis on the undiminished labor-day narrow-minded, since Lassalle’s principle can only be applied to a part of the
social product.

The “undiminished” proceeds of labor have already unnoticeably become converted into the “diminished” proceeds, although what the producer is deprived of in his capacity as a private individual benefits him directly or indirectly in his capacity as a member of society.

Marx concludes his critique of Lassalle’s undiminished labor-day with the remark that, although an undiminished distribution of the proceeds of labor to the laborers is an economic impossibility, some of the necessary deductions do indirectly benefit the workers. (This can be seen as another argument why the principle of an undiminished labor-day is irrelevant.)

(a) Now Marx proceeds to a different argument; he has larger fish to fry. In [mecw], Marx had already remarked that the concept of “proceeds of labor” is ambiguous. Now he contests the validity of this concept of altogether.

Just as the phrase of the “undiminished” proceeds of labor has disappeared, so will
the phrase of the “proceeds of labor” itself disappear now.

This is surprising. Doesn’t labor naturally have a product?

Within the co-operative society based on common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products;

⇑ If workers get certificates about how much they have worked, and go into the store to exchange those certificates with products of their choosing, this is not exchange. It may look like exchange, but ⇓ the following ingredient of commodity-exchange is missing:

just as little does the labor employed on the products appear here as the value of these products, as a material quality possessed by them,

⇑ The missing ingredient is that in co-operative society, the labor spent to produce the products does not take the social form of an objective property of these products themselves. ⇩ Co-operative society does not need the detour over the products in order to integrate the
individual labors:
since individual labor now exists directly as a component part of total labor, in contrast to capitalist society, where it is such a component part only through a detour.

As so often elsewhere, I went out on a limb with this translation here. I wanted to avoid the ambiguity of the translation from Progress Publishers, which says: “individual labor no longer exists in an indirect fashion but directly as a component part of total labor.” The thing which is indirect versus direct is not the existence of the individual labor, but its integration into the overall social labor.

Since the link between the labors no longer goes through the products, the association between specific products and specific labor processes, which seems such a natural thing in capitalism, is also eroded:
The phrase “proceeds of labor,” objectionable also today on account of its ambiguity, thus loses all meaning.

Das Wort „Arbeitsertrag“, auch heutzutage wegen seiner Zweideutigkeit verwerflich, verliert so allen Sinn.
The difference between capitalism and socialism is the following. The ultimate purpose of the social labor process is to produce the things needed by the members of society. In capitalism, this social labor process exists in the form of many individual private labors. These private labors have a double character; on the one hand, the immediate purpose of the individual laborer is to produce a specific use-value. But an additional element comes in because of the following: whether these individual labor-process qualify as meaningful parts of the overall social labor process is decided by the question whether this use-value can be sold. This is the detour Marx is talking about, and this detour is directly connected with the concept of “proceeds of labor.” Every labor-process must have some tangible proceeds, because these proceeds are the entrance ticket of the labor process into the heaven of socially accepted labor.

In socialism things are different. Here the labor process is from the beginning organized by society. If someone engages in a certain labor process, then this means by definition that this particular labor is deemed socially necessary; otherwise it would not have been performed. Labor no longer gains its legitimacy through its proceeds, but it is directly social.

An example of a labor process that is directly socially useful, and not through the detour of its proceeds, is the labor of a teacher. In a private school, the teacher performs a service
which is sold to the parents of the student. I.e., it is not the result of the labor which is sold, but the process itself. One might think that the proceeds of the teacher’s labor is the educated student. But this is not true. The student educates himself or herself, all the teacher can do is to channel the life-energy of the student.

In socialism, therefore, the concept of “proceeds of labor” loses meaning because the social legitimation of the labor processes no longer goes through the products. The reason why this meaningless concept was nevertheless raised by the Lassallians is that the socialism under question is not developing on its own foundations but it is emerging from capitalism:

What we are dealing with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, the way as it emerges from capitalist society, therefore still imprinted in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it comes.

20:1 Womit wir es hier zu tun haben, ist eine kommunistische Gesellschaft, nicht wie sie sich auf ihrer eignen Grundlage entwickelt hat, sondern umgekehrt, wie sie eben aus der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft hervorgeht, also in jeder Beziehung, ökonomisch, sittlich, geistig, noch behaftet ist mit den Muttermalen der alten Gesellschaft, aus deren Schoß sie herkommt.
The phrase “in accord with this” at the beginning of the next sentence is a place holder for an argument which Marx does not yet make at this point. He only formulates the result: if socialism emerges from capitalism, then the producer will or should be paid exactly according to his or her labor, and, after the deductions, i.e., taxes, each producer should be able to buy the products of others’ labor on a one-for-one basis for his or her own labor.

In accord with this, the individual producer receives back from society—after the deductions have been made—exactly what he gives to it. What he has given to it is his individual quantum of labor. For example, the social working day consists of the sum of the individual hours of work; the individual labor time of the individual producer is the part of the social working day contributed by him, his share in it. He receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such-and-such an amount of labor (after deduct-
Marx begins his explanation why production should be organized in this way with the observation that this principle is the same that underlies commodity production itself.

Here, obviously, the same principle prevails as that which regulates the exchange of commodities, as far as this is exchange of equal values. Content and form are changed, because under the altered circumstances no one can give anything except his labor, and because, on the other hand, nothing can pass into the ownership of individuals, except in-
dividual means of consumption. But as far as the distribution of the latter among the individual producers is concerned, the same principle prevails as in the exchange of commodity equivalents: a given amount of labor in one form is exchanged for an equal amount of labor in another form.

**Equal right** is therefore here still, in principle,—*bourgeois right*, although principle and practice are no longer at loggerheads, while the exchange of equivalents in commodity exchange exists only *on the average* and not in the individual case.

In spite of this advance, this *equal right* is always still encumbered by a bourgeois barrier. The right of the producers is *proportionsmittel*. Was aber die Verteilung der letzteren unter die einzelnen Produzenten betrifft, herrscht dasselbe Prinzip wie beim Austausch von Warenäquivalenten, es wird gleich viel Arbeit in einer Form gegen gleich viel Arbeit in einer andern ausgetauscht.

20:3 Das *gleiche Recht* ist hier daher immer noch — dem Prinzip nach — das *bürgerliche Recht*, obgleich Prinzip und Praxis sich nicht mehr in den Haaren liegen, während der Austausch von Äquivalenten beim Warenaustausch nur *im Durchschnitt*, nicht für den einzelnen Fall existiert.

20:4/o Trotz dieses Fortschritts ist dieses *gleiche Recht* stets noch mit einer bürgerlichen Schranke behaftet. Das Recht der Pro-
2.1 I
tional to the labor they supply; the equal-
ity consists in the fact that measurement is
made with an equal standard, labor.

duzenten ist ihren Arbeitslieferungen pro-
portionell; die Gleichheit besteht darin, daß
an gleichem Maßstab, der Arbeit, gemessen
wird.

This was a little dialectical triad. First Marx says that the rights are equal; then he says
they are not equal, they are encumbered by a bourgeois (read: capitalist) barrier, namely,
they are proportional to labor. Finally he shows the equality in this inequality: their equality
consists in the fact that equal standards are applied. Next he elaborates the inequality
implied by these equal rights: since the individuals are different, equal standards lead to
unequal outcomes for them:

But one man is superior to another physi-
cally, or mentally, and supplies more labor
in the same time, or can labor for a longer
time; and labor, to serve as a measure, must
be defined by its duration or intensity, other-
wise it ceases to be a standard of measure-
ment.

Der eine ist aber physisch oder geistig dem
anderen überlegen, liefert also in derselben
Zeit mehr Arbeit oder kann während mehr
Zeit arbeiten; und die Arbeit, um als Maß zu
dienen, muß der Ausdehnung oder der In-
tensität nach bestimmt werden, sonst hörte
sie auf, Maßstab zu sein.
It is not possible to escape this inequality by ignoring differences in length or intensity of labor: labor can only serve as a measure if its extent and intensity are determinate. In other words, one cannot measure something with a measure which is not well defined. This inequality is no longer based on class distinctions, but on individual distinctions, but an inequality it is.

This equal right is an unequal right for unequal labor. It recognizes no class differences, because everyone is only a worker like everyone else; but it tacitly recognizes unequal individual endowment, and thus productive capacity, as a natural privilege. It is, therefore, as far as its content is concerned, a right of inequality, like every right.

We should not be surprised at this outcome, because a legal approach always implies inequality in content. The next sentence starts out with a brief justification of this claim. For part of a sentence, Marx argues here at a higher level of abstraction: he no longer shows the
inequality contained in the right of equal labor income, but he gives a more general argument why every legal right contains inequality.

Right, by its very nature, can consist only in the application of an equal standard; but unequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal individuals) are measurable only by an equal standard insofar as they are brought under an equal point of view, are taken from one definite side only—for instance, in the present case, are regarded only as workers and nothing more is seen in them, everything else being ignored.

At the end of the sentence, Marx is back to the present case, the inequality implied in the principle of equal pay for equal work. Another inequality in this principle is its disregard whether the workers are married, how many children they have, etc.

Further, one worker is married, another is

Ferner: Ein Arbeiter ist verheiratet, der and-
not; one has more children than another, and
so on and so forth. Thus, with an equal per-
formance of labor, and hence an equal share
in the social consumption fund, one will in
fact receive more than another, one will be
richer than another, and so on. To avoid all
these defects, right, instead of being equal,
would have to be unequal.

But these defects are inevitable in the
first phase of communist society as it is
when it has just emerged after prolonged
birth pangs from capitalist society. Right
can never be higher than the economic struc-
ture of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby.

In a higher phase of communist soci-
ety, one will fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on. To avoid all these defects, right, instead of being equal, would have to be unequal.

21:1 Aber diese Mißstände sind unver-
meidbar in der ersten Phase der kommu-
nistischen Gesellschaft, wie sie eben aus
der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft nach lan-
gen Geburtswehen hervorgegangen ist. Das
Recht kann nie höher sein als die ökonomi-
sche Gestaltung und dadurch bedingte Kul-
turentwicklung der Gesellschaft.

21:2 In einer höheren Phase der kommu-
I have dealt at greater length with the

From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!

I have dealt at greater length with the

21:3/o Ich bin weitläufiger auf den „un-
“undiminished” proceeds of labor, on the one hand, and with “equal right” and “fair distribution,” on the other, in order to show what a crime it is to attempt, on the one hand, to force on our Party again, as dogmas, ideas which in a certain period had some meaning but have now become obsolete verbal rubbish, while again perverting, on the other, the realist outlook, which it cost so much effort to instill into the Party but which has now taken root in it, by means of ideological nonsense about right and other trash so common among the democrats and French socialists.

Now still another angle of Marx’s critique:

Quite apart from the analysis so far given, it was in general a mistake to make a verkürzten Arbeitsertrag“, einerseits, „das gleiche Recht“, „die gerechte Verteilung“ andererseits eingegangen, um zu zeigen, wie sehr man frevelt, wenn man einerseits Vorstellungen, die zu einer gewissen Zeit einen Sinn hatten, jetzt aber zu veraltetem Phrasenkram geworden, unsrer Partei wieder als Dogmen aufdrängen will, andererseits aber die realistische Auffassung, die der Partei so mühvoll beigebracht worden, aber Wurzeln in ihr geschlagen, wieder durch ideologische Rechts- und andre, den Demokraten und französischen Sozialisten so geläufige Flausen verdreht.

22:1 Abgesehen von dem bisher Entwickelten war es überhaupt fehlerhaft, von
fuss about so-called *distribution* and put the principal stress on it.

Any distribution whatever of the means of consumption is only a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves. The latter distribution, however, is a feature of the mode of production itself. The capitalist mode of production, for example, rests on the fact that the material conditions of production are in the hands of nonworkers in the form of property in capital and land, while the masses are only owners of the personal condition of production, of labor power. If the elements of production are so distributed, then the present-day distribution of the means of consumption results automatically. If the
material conditions of production are the co-operative property of the workers themselves, then there likewise results a distribution of the means of consumption different from the present one. Vulgar socialism (and from it in turn a section of the democrats) has taken over from the bourgeois economists the consideration and treatment of distribution as independent of the mode of production and hence the presentation of socialism as turning principally on distribution. After the real relation has long been made clear, why retrogress again?

4. “The emancipation of labor must be the work of the working class, relative to which all other classes are *only one reactionary mass.*”
The first strophe is taken from the introductory words of the Rules of the International, but “improved.” There it is said: “The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the workers themselves”; here, on the contrary, the “working class” has to emancipate—what? “Labor.” Let him understand who can.

In compensation, the antistrophe, on the other hand, is a Lassallean quotation of the first water: “relative to which” (the working class) “all other classes are only one reactionary mass.”

In the Communist Manifesto it is said: “Of all the classes that stand face-to-face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The
other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product.”

The bourgeoisie is here conceived as a revolutionary class—as the bearer of large-scale industry—relative to the feudal lords and the lower middle class, who desire to maintain all social positions that are the creation of obsolete modes of production. Thus, they do not form together with the bourgeoisie “only one reactionary mass.”

On the other hand, the proletariat is revolutionary relative to the bourgeoisie because, having itself grown up on the basis of large-scale industry, it strives to strip off from production the capitalist character that the bourgeoisie seeks to perpetuate. But

Klasse. Die übrigen Klassen verkommen und gehn unter mit der großen Industrie, das Proletariat ist ihr eigenstes Produkt.“

23:1 Die Bourgeoisie ist hier als revolutionäre Klasse aufgefaßt — als Trägerin der großen Industrie — gegenüber Feudalen und Mittelständen, welche alle gesellschaftlichen Positionen behaupten wollen, die das Gebilde veralteter Produktionsweisen. Sie bilden also nicht zusammen mit der Bourgeoisie nur eine reaktionäre Masse.

23:2 Andrerseits ist das Proletariat der Bourgeoisie gegenüber revolutionär, weil es, selbst erwachsen auf dem Boden der großen Industrie, der Produktion den kapitalistischen Charakter abzustreifen strebt, den die Bourgeoisie zu verewigen sucht.
the *Manifesto* adds that the “lower middle class” is becoming revolutionary “in view of [its] impending transfer to the proletariat.”

From this point of view, therefore, it is again nonsense to say that it, together with the bourgeoisie, and with the feudal lords into the bargain, “form only one reactionary mass” relative to the working class.

Has one proclaimed to the artisan, small manufacturers, etc., and *peasants* during the last elections: Relative to us, you, together with the bourgeoisie and feudal lords, form one reactionary mass?

Lassalle knew the *Communist Manifesto* by heart, as his faithful followers know the gospels written by him. If, therefore, he has

Aber das Manifest setzt hinzu: daß die „Mittelstände … revolutionär (werden) … im Hinblick auf ihren bevorstehenden Übergang ins Proletariat“.

23:3 Von diesem Gesichtspunkt ist es also wieder Unsinn, daß sie, „zusammen mit der Bourgeoisie“ und obendrein den Feudalen, gegenüber der Arbeiterklasse „nur eine reaktionäre Masse bilden“.

23:4 Hat man bei den letzten Wahlen Handwerkern, kleinen Industriellen etc. und *Bauern* zugerufen: Uns gegenüber bildet ihr mit Bourgeois und Feudalen nur eine reaktionäre Masse?

23:5 Lassalle wußte das „Kommunistische Manifest“ auswendig wie seine Gläubigen die von ihm verfaßten Heilsschriften.
falsified it so grossly, this has occurred only to put a good color on his alliance with absolutist and feudal opponents against the bourgeoisie.

In the above paragraph, moreover, his oracular saying is dragged in by main force without any connection with the botched quotation from the Rules of the International. Thus, it is simply an impertinence, and indeed not at all displeasing to Herr Bismarck, one of those cheap pieces of insolence in which the Marat of Berlin deals. [Marat of Berlin a reference to Hasselmann, chief editor of the Neuer Social-Demokrat]

5. “The working class strives for its emancipation first of all within the framework of the present-day national states, conscious that the
necessary result of its efforts, which are common to the workers of all civilized countries, will be the international brotherhood of peoples.”

Lassalle, in opposition to the Communist Manifesto and to all earlier socialism, conceived the workers’ movement from the narrowest national standpoint. He is being followed in this—and that after the work of the International!

It is altogether self-evident that, to be able to fight at all, the working class must organize itself at home as a class and that its own country is the immediate arena of its struggle—insofar as its class struggle is national, not in substance, but, as the Communist Manifesto says, “in form.” But

23:8 Lassalle hatte, im Gegensatz zum „Kommunistischen Manifest“ und zu allem früheren Sozialismus, die Arbeiterbewegung vom engsten nationalen Standpunkt gefaßt. Man folgt ihm darin — und dies nach dem Wirken der Internationalen!

23:9/o Es versteht sich ganz von selbst, daß, um überhaupt kämpfen zu können, die Arbeiterklasse sich bei sich zu Haus organisieren muß als Klasse, und daß das Inland der unmittelbare Schauplatz ihres Kampfs. Insofern ist ihr Klassenkampf, nicht dem Inhalt, sondern, wie das „Kommunistische
the “framework of the present-day national state,” for instance, the German Empire, is itself, in its turn, economically “within the framework” of the world market, politically “within the framework” of the system of states. Every businessman knows that German trade is at the same time foreign trade, and the greatness of Herr Bismarck consists, to be sure, precisely in his pursuing a kind of *international* policy.

And to what does the German Workers’ party reduce its internationalism? To the consciousness that the result of its efforts will be “the *international brotherhood of peoples*”—a phrase borrowed from the bourgeois League of Peace and Freedom, which is intended to pass as equivalent to Manifest“ sagt, „der Form nach“ national. Aber der „Rahmen des heutigen nationalen Staats“, z.B. des Deutschen Reichs, steht selbst wieder ökonomisch „im Rahmen des Weltmarkts“, politisch „im Rahmen des Staatensystems“. Der erste beste Kaufmann weiß, daß der deutsche Handel zugleich ausländischer Handel ist, und die Größe des Herrn Bismarck besteht ja eben in seiner Art *internationaler* Politik.

24:1 Und worauf reduziert die deutsche Arbeiterpartei ihren Internationalismus? Auf das Bewußtsein, daß das Ergebnis ihres Strebens „die *internationale Völkerverbrüderung* sein wird“ — eine dem bürgerlichen Freiheits- und Friedensbund entlehnte Phrase, die als Äquivalent pas-
the international brotherhood of working classes in the joint struggle against the ruling classes and their governments. Not a word, therefore, about the international functions of the German working class! And it is thus that it is to challenge its own bourgeoisie—which is already linked up in brotherhood against it with the bourgeoisie of all other countries—and Herr Bismarck’s international policy of conspiracy.

In fact, the internationalism of the program stands even infinitely below that of the Free Trade party. The latter also asserts that the result of its efforts will be “the international brotherhood of peoples.” But it also does something to make trade international and by no means contents itself with the

sieren soll für die internationale Verbrüderung der Arbeiterklassen im gemeinschaftlichen Kampf gegen die herrschenden Klassen und ihre Regierungen. Von internationalen Funktionen der deutschen Arbeiterklasse also kein Wort! Und so soll sie ihrer eignen, mit den Bourgeois aller andern Länder bereits gegen sie verbrüderten Bourgeoisie und Herrn Bismarcks internationaler Verschwö rungspolitik das Paroli bieten!

24:2 In der Tat steht das internationale Bekenntnis des Programms noch unendlich tief unter dem der Freihandelspartei. Auch sie behauptet, das Ergebnis ihres Strebens sei „die internationale Völkerverbrüderung“. Sie tut aber auch etwas, um den Handel international zu machen, und begnügt
consciousness that all people are carrying on trade at home.

The international activity of the working classes does not in any way depend on the existence of the *International Working Men’s Association*. This was only the first attempt to create a central organ for the activity; an attempt which was a lasting success on account of the impulse which it gave but which was no longer realizable *in its first historical form* after the fall of the Paris Commune.

Bismarck’s Norddeutsche was absolutely right when it announced, to the satisfaction of its master, that the German Workers’ party had sworn off internationalism in the new program.

sich keineswegs bei dem Bewußtsein — daß alle Völker bei sich zu Haus Handel treiben.

24:3 Die internationale Tätigkeit der Arbeiterklassen hängt in keiner Art von der Existenz der „Internationalen Arbeiterassoziation“ ab. Diese war nur der erste Versuch, jener Tätigkeit ein Zentralorgan zu schaffen; ein Versuch, der durch den Anstoß, welchen er gab, von bleibendem Erfolg, aber in seiner ersten historischen Form nach dem Fall der Pariser Kommune nicht länger durchführbar war.

24:4 Bismarcks „Norddeutsche“ war vollständig im Recht, wenn sie zur Zufriedenheit ihres Meisters verkündete, die deutsche Arbeiterpartei habe in dem neuen Programm dem Internationalismus abgeschworen.
“Starting from these basic principles, the German workers’ party strives by all legal means for the free state—and—socialist society: that abolition of the wage system together with the iron law of wages—and—exploitation in every form; the elimination of all social and political inequality.”

I shall return to the “free” state later.

So, in future, the German Workers’ party has got to believe in Lassalle’s “iron law of wages”! That this may not be lost, the nonsense is perpetrated of speaking of the “abolition of the wage system” (it should read: system of wage labor), “together with the iron law of wages” — and — exploitation in every form; the elimination of all social and political inequality.”

24:5 „Von diesen Grundsätzen ausgehend, er- strebt die deutsche Arbeiterpartei mit allen gesetzlichen Mitteln den freien Staat — und — die sozialistische Gesellschaft; die Aufhebung des Lohnsystems mit dem ehernen Lohngesetz — und — der Ausbeutung in jeder Gestalt; die Beseitigung aller sozialen und politischen Ungleichheit.“


24:7/o Also in Zukunft hat die deutsche Arbeiterpartei an Lassalles „ehernes Lohn- gesetz“ zu glauben! Damit es nicht verlorengeht, begeht man den Unsinn, von „Auf- hebung des Lohnsystems“ (sollte heißen: System der Lohnarbeit) „mit dem ehernen
iron law of wages.” If I abolish wage labor, then naturally I abolish its laws also, whether they are of “iron” or sponge. But Lassalle’s attack on wage labor turns almost solely on this so-called law. In order, therefore, to prove that Lassalle’s sect has conquered, the “wage system” must be abolished “together with the iron law of wages” and not without it.

It is well known that nothing of the “iron law of wages” is Lassalle’s except the word “iron” borrowed from Goethe’s “great, eternal iron laws.” [1] The word “iron” is a label by which the true believers recognize one another. But if I take the law with Lassalle’s stamp on it, and consequently in his sense, Lohngesetz“ zu sprechen. Hebe ich die Lohnarbeit auf, so hebe ich natürlich auch ihre Gesetze auf, seien sie „ehern“ oder schwammig. Aber Lassalles Bekämpfung der Lohnarbeit dreht sich fast nur um dies sog. Gesetz. Um daher zu beweisen, daß die Lassallesche Sekte gesiegt hat, muß das „Lohnsystem mit dem ehernen Lohngesetz“ aufgehoben werden und nicht ohne dasselbe.

then I must also take it with his substantiation for it. And what is that? As Lange already showed, shortly after Lassalle’s death, it is the Malthusian theory of population (preached by Lange himself). But if this theory is correct, then again I cannot abolish the law even if I abolish wage labor a hundred times over, because the law then governs not only the system of wage labor but every social system. Basing themselves directly on this, the economists have been proving for 50 years and more that socialism cannot abolish poverty, which has its basis in nature, but can only make it general, distribute it simultaneously over the whole surface of society!

her in seinem Sinn, so muß ich es auch mit seiner Begründung nehmen. Und was ist sie? Wie Lange schon kurz nach Lassalles Tod zeigte: die (von Lange selbst gepredigte) Malthussche Bevölkerungstheorie[19]. Ist diese aber richtig, so kann ich wieder das Gesetz nicht aufheben, und wenn ich hundertmal die Lohnarbeit aufhebe, weil das Gesetz dann nicht nur das System der Lohnarbeit, sondern jedes gesellschaftliche System beherrscht. Grade hierauf fußend, haben seit fünfzig Jahren und länger die Ökonomen bewiesen, daß der Sozialismus das naturbegründete Elend nicht aufheben, sondern nur verallgemeinern, gleichzeitig über die ganze Oberfläche der Gesellschaft verteilen könne!
But all this is not the main thing. *Quite apart* from the *false* Lassallean formulation of the law, the truly outrageous retrogression consists in the following:

Since Lassalle’s death, there has asserted itself in our party the scientific understanding that *wages* are not what they *seem* to be—notably, the *value*, or *price*, of *labor*—but only a masked form for the *value*, or *price*, of *labor power*. Thereby, the whole bourgeois conception of wages hitherto, as well as all the criticism hitherto directed against this conception, was thrown overboard once and for all. It was made clear that the wage worker has permission to work for his own subsistence—that is, *to live*, only insofar as he works for a certain time...
gratis for the capitalist (and hence also for the latter’s co-consumers of surplus value); that the whole capitalist system of production turns on the increase of this gratis labor by extending the working day, or by developing the productivity—that is, increasing the intensity or labor power, etc.; that, consequently, the system of wage labor is a system of slavery, and indeed of a slavery which becomes more severe in proportion as the social productive forces of labor develop, whether the worker receives better or worse payment. And after this understanding has gained more and more ground in our party, some return to Lassalle’s dogma although they must have known that Lassalle did not know what wages were, but, follow-

leben, soweit er gewisse Zeit umsonst für den Kapitalisten (daher auch für dessen Mitzehrer am Mehrwert) arbeitet; daß das ganze kapitalistische Produktionssystem sich darum dreht, diese Gratisarbeit zu verlängern durch Ausdehnung des Arbeitstages oder durch Entwicklung der Produktivität, größere Spannung der Arbeitskraft etc.; daß also das System der Lohnarbeit ein System der Sklaverei, und zwar einer Sklaverei ist, die im selben Maß härter wird, wie sich die gesellschaftlichen Produktivkräfte der Arbeit entwickeln, ob nun der Arbeiter bessere oder schlechtere Zahlung empfange. Und nachdem diese Einsicht unter unserer Partei sich mehr und mehr Bahn gebrochen, kehrt man zu Lassalles Dogmen zurück, obgleich
ing in the wake of the bourgeois economists, took the appearance for the essence of the matter.

It is as if, among slaves who have at last got behind the secret of slavery and broken out in rebellion, a slave still in thrall to obsolete notions were to inscribe on the program of the rebellion: Slavery must be abolished because the feeding of slaves in the system of slavery cannot exceed a certain low maximum!

Does not the mere fact that the representatives of our party were capable of perpetrating such a monstrous attack on the understanding that has spread among the

man nun wissen mußte, daß Lassalle nicht wußte, was der Arbeitslohn war, sondern, im Gefolg der bürgerlichen Ökonomen, den Schein für das Wesen der Sache nahm.

26:1 Es ist, als ob unter Sklaven, die endlich hinter das Geheimnis der Sklaverei gekommen und in Rebellion ausgebrochen, ein in veralteten Vorstellungen befangener Sklave auf das Programm der Rebellion schriebe: Die Sklaverei muß abgeschafft werden, weil die Beköstigung der Sklaven im System der Sklaverei ein gewisses niedriges Maximum nicht überschreiten kann!

26:2 Die bloße Tatsache, daß die Vertreter unserer Partei fähig waren, ein so ungeheuerliches Attentat auf die in der Parteimasse verbreitete Einsicht zu begehn — beweist
mass of our party prove, by itself, with what frevelhaften levity (and with what lack of conscience) they set to work in drawing up this compromise program!

Instead of the indefinite concluding phrase of the paragraph, “the elimination of all social and political inequality,” it ought to have been said that with the abolition of class distinctions all social and political inequality arising from them would disappear of itself.

2.3 III

“The German Workers’ party, in order to pave the way to the solution of the social question, demands the establishment of producers’ co-operative societies with state aid un-

26:3 Anstatt der unbestimmten Schlußphrase des Paragraphen, „die Beseitigung aller sozialen und politischen Ungleichheit“, war zu sagen, daß mit der Abschaffung der Klassenunterschiede von selbst alle aus ihnen entspringende soziale und politische Ungleichheit verschwindet.

26:4 „Die deutsche Arbeiterpartei verlangt um die Lösung der sozialen Frage anzubah-
nen, die Errichtung von Produktivgenossen-
schaften mit Staatshilfe unter der demokrati-
der the democratic control of the toiling people. The producers’ co-operative societies are to be called into being for industry and agriculture on such a scale that the socialist organization of the total labor will arise from them.”

After the Lassallean “iron law of wages,” now the remedy of the prophet! The way to it is “paved” in worthy fashion! In place of the existing class struggle appears a newspaper scribbler’s phrase: “the social question,” to the “solution” of which one “paves the way.” Instead of arising from the revolutionary process of transformation of society, the “socialist organization of the total labor” “arises” from the “state aid” that the state gives to the producers’ co-operative societies and which the state, not the work-

ers, "calls into being." It is worthy of Lassalle’s imagination that with state loans one can build a new society just as well as a new railway!

From ⟨the remnants of⟩ a sense of shame, "state aid" has been put—under the democratic control of the "toiling people."

In the first place, the majority of the "toiling people" in Germany consists of peasants, not proletarians.

Second, "democratic" means in German "Volksherrschaftlich" [by the rule of the people]. But what does "control by the rule of the people of the toiling people" mean? And particularly in the case of a toiling people which, through these demands that it puts to the state, expresses its full con-

ist dies würdig der Einbildung Lassalles, daß man mit Staatsanlehn ebensogut eine neue Gesellschaft bauen kann wie eine neue Eisenbahn!

27:1 Aus ⟨einem Rest von⟩ Scham stellt man „die Staatshilfe“ — „unter die demokratische Kontrolle des arbeitenden Volks“.

27:2 Erstens besteht „das arbeitende Volk“ in Deutschland zur Majorität aus Bauern und nicht aus Proletariern.

27:3 Zweitens heißt „demokratisch“ zu deutsch „volksherrschaftlich“. Was heißt aber „die volksherrschaftliche Kontrolle des arbeitenden Volkes“? Und nun gar bei einem Arbeitervolk, das durch diese Forde-

rungen, die es an den Staat stellt, sein volles Bewußtsein ausspricht, daß es weder an der
consciousness that it neither rules nor is ripe for ruling!

It would be superfluous to deal here with the criticism of the recipe prescribed by Buchez in the reign of Louis Philippe, in opposition to the French socialists and accepted by the reactionary workers, of the Atelier. The chief offense does not lie in having inscribed this specific nostrum in the program, but in taking, in general, a retrograde step from the standpoint of a class movement to that of a sectarian movement.

That the workers desire to establish the conditions for co-operative production on a social scale, and first of all on a national scale, in their own country, only means that

Herrschaft ist, noch zur Herrschaft reif ist!


27:5 Daß die Arbeiter die Bedingungen der genossenschaftlichen Produktion auf sozialem und zunächst bei sich, also [auf] nationalem Maßstab herstellen wollen, heißt
they are working to revolutionize the present conditions of production, and it has nothing in common with the foundation of co-operative societies with state aid. But as far as the present co-operative societies are concerned, they are of value only insofar as they are the independent creations of the workers and not protégés either of the governments or of the bourgeois.

2.4 [IV]

I come now to the democratic section.

A. “The free basis of the state.”

First of all, according to II, the German Workers’ party strives for “the free state.”

Free state—what is this?
It is by no means the aim of the workers, who have got rid of the narrow mentality of humble subjects, to set the state free. In the German Empire, the “state” is almost as “free” as in Russia. Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it; and today, too, the forms of state are more free or less free to the extent that they restrict the “freedom of the state.”

The German Workers’ party—at least if it adopts the program—shows that its socialist ideas are not even skin-deep; in that, instead of treating existing society (and this holds good for any future one) as the basis of the existing state (or of the future


28:1 Die deutsche Arbeiterpartei — wenigstens, wenn sie das Programm zu dem ihren macht — zeigt, wie ihr die sozialistischen Ideen nicht einmal hauttief sitzen, indem sie, statt die bestehende Gesellschaft (und das gilt von jeder künftigen) als Grund-
state in the case of future society), it treats the state rather as an independent entity that possesses its own intellectual, ethical, and libertarian bases.

And what of the riotous misuse which the program makes of the words “present-day state,” “present-day society,” and of the still more riotous misconception it creates in regard to the state to which it addresses its demands?

“Present-day society” is capitalist society, which exists in all civilized countries, more or less free from medieval admixture, more or less modified by the particular historical development of each country, more

lage des bestehenden Staats (oder künftigen, für künftige Gesellschaft) zu behandeln, den Staat vielmehr als ein selbständiges Wesen behandelt, das seine eigenen „geistigen, sittlichen, freiheitlichen Grundlagen“ besitzt.


28:3 Die „heutige Gesellschaft“ ist die kapitalistische Gesellschaft, die in allen Kulturländern existiert, mehr oder weniger frei von mittelalterigem Beisatz, mehr oder weniger durch die besondere geschichtliche Ent-
or less developed. On the other hand, the “present-day state” changes with a country’s frontier. It is a different one in the Prusso-German Empire than in Switzerland, and a different one in England than in the United States. “The present-day state” is therefore a fiction.

Nevertheless, the different states of the different civilized countries, in spite or their motley diversity of form, all have this in common: that they are based on modern bourgeois society, only one more or less capitalistically developed. They have, therefore, also certain essential characteristics in common. In this sense, it is possible to speak of the “present-day state” in contrast with the future, in which its present root, wicklung jedes Landes modifiziert, mehr oder weniger entwickelt. Dagegen der „heutige Staat“ wechselt mit der Landesgrenze. Er ist ein andrer im preußisch-deutschen Reich als in der Schweiz, ein andrer in England als in den Vereinigten Staaten. „Der heutige Staat“ ist also eine Fiktion.

28:4 Jedoch haben die verschiedenen Staaten der verschiedenen Kulturländer, trotz ihrer bunten Formverschiedenheit, alle das gemein, daß sie auf dem Boden der modernen bürgerlichen Gesellschaft stehn, nur einer mehr oder minder kapitalistisch entwickelten. Sie haben daher auch gewisse wesentliche Charaktere gemein. In diesem Sinn kann man von „heutigem Staatswesen“ sprechen, im Gegensatz zur Zukunft, worin
bourgeois society, will have died off.

The question then arises: What transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions? This question can only be answered scientifically, and even a thousand-fold combination of the word ‘people’ with the word ‘state’ does not get a flea-hop nearer to the problem.

Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political tran-
sition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

Now the program does not deal with this nor with the future state of communist society.

Its political demands contain nothing beyond the old democratic litany familiar to all: universal suffrage, direct legislation, popular rights, a people’s militia, etc. They are a mere echo of the bourgeois People’s party, of the League of Peace and Freedom. They are all demands which, insofar as they are not exaggerated in fantastic presentation, have already been realized. Only the state to which they belong does not
lie within the borders of the German Empire, but in Switzerland, the United States, etc. This sort of “state of the future” is a present-day state, although existing outside the “framework” of the German Empire.

But one thing has been forgotten. Since the German Workers’ party expressly declares that it acts within “the present-day national state,” hence within its own state, the Prusso-German Empire—its demands would indeed be otherwise largely meaningless, since one only demands what one has not got—it should not have forgotten the chief thing, namely, that all those pretty little gewgaws rest on the recognition of the so-called sovereignty of the people and hence are appropriate only in a democratic innerhalb der deutschen Reichsgrenze, sondern in der Schweiz, den Vereinigten Staaten etc. Diese Sorte „Zukunftsstaat“ ist heutiger Staat, obgleich außerhalb „des Rahmens“ des Deutschen Reichs existierend.

29:2 Aber man hat eins vergessen. Da die deutsche Arbeiterpartei ausdrücklich erklärt, sich innerhalb „des heutigen nationalen Staats“, also ihres Staats, des preußisch-deutschen Reichs, zu bewegen — ihre Forderungen wären ja sonst auch großenteils sinnlos, da man nur fordert, was man noch nicht hat —, so durfte sie die Hauptsache nicht vergessen, nämlich daß alle jene schönen Sächelchen auf der Anerkennung der sog. Volkssouveränität beruhn, daß sie daher nur in einer demokratischen Republik
Since one has not the courage—and wisely so, for the circumstances demand caution—to demand the democratic republic, as the French workers’ programs under Louis Philippe and under Louis Napoleon did, one should not have resorted, either, to the subterfuge ⟨, neither “honest” [1] nor decent,⟩ of demanding things which have meaning only in a democratic republic from a state which is nothing but a police-guarded military despotism, embellished with parliamentary forms, alloyed with a feudal admixture, already influenced by the bourgeoisie, and bureaucratically carpentered, ⟨and then to assure this state into the bargain that one imagines one will be able to force such

29:3 Da man nicht den Mut hat — und weislich, denn die Verhältnisse gebieten Vorsicht —, die demokratische Republik zu verlangen, wie es die französischen Arbeiterprogramme unter Louis-Philippe und unter Louis-Napoleon taten — so hätte man auch nicht zu der ⟨weder „ehrlichen“ noch würdigen⟩ Finte flüchten sollen, Dinge, die nur in einer demokratischen Republik Sinn haben, von einem Staat zu verlangen, der nichts andres als ein mit parlamentarischen Formen verbrämter, mit feudalem Beisatz vermischter und zugleich schon von der Bourgeoisie beeinflußter, bürokratisch gezimmerter, polizeilich gehüteter Militärdespotismus ist, ⟨und diesem Staat obendrein
things upon it “by legal means.”

Even vulgar democracy, which sees the millennium in the democratic republic, and has no suspicion that it is precisely in this last form of state of bourgeois society that the class struggle has to be fought out to a conclusion—even it towers mountains above this kind of democratism, which keeps within the limits of what is permitted by the police and not permitted by logic.

That, in fact, by the word “state” is meant the government machine, or the state insofar as it forms a special organism separated from society through division of labor, is

noch zu beteuern, daß man ihm dergleichen „mit gesetzlichen Mitteln“ aufdringen zu können wühnt!

29:4 Selbst die vulgäre Demokratie, die in der demokratischen Republik das Tausendjährige Reich sieht und keine Ahnung davon hat, daß grade in dieser letzten Staatsform der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft der Klassenkampf definitiv auszufechten ist — selbst sie steht noch berghoch über solcherart Demokratentum innerhalb der Grenzen des polizeilich Erlaubten und logisch Unerlaubten.

29:5/o Daß man in der Tat unter „Staat“ die Regierungsmaschine versteht oder den Staat, soweit er einen durch Teilung der Arbeit von der Gesellschaft besonderen,
shown by the words “the German Workers’ party demands as the economic basis of the state: a single progressive income tax,” etc. Taxes are the economic basis of the government machinery and of nothing else. In the state of the future, existing in Switzerland, this demand has been pretty well fulfilled. Income tax presupposes various sources of income of the various social classes, and hence capitalist society. It is, therefore, nothing remarkable that the Liverpool financial reformers—bourgeois headed by Gladstone’s brother—are putting forward the same demand as the program.
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 school attendance. Free instruction.”

“Equal education for the people”? What idea lies behind these words? Is it believed that in present-day society (and it is only with this one has to deal) education can be *equal* for all classes? Or is it demanded that the upper classes also shall be compulsorily reduced to the modicum of education—the elementary school—that alone is compatible with the economic conditions not only of the wage-workers but of the peasants as well?

30:1 B. „Die deutsche Arbeiterpartei verlangt als geistige und sittliche Grundlage des Staats


30:3 *Gleiche Volkserziehung?* Was bildet man sich unter diesen Worten ein? Glaubt man, daß in der heutigen Gesellschaft (und man hat nur mit der zu tun) die Erziehung für alle Klassen *gleich* sein kann? Oder verlangt man, daß auch die höheren Klassen zwangsweise auf das Modikum Erziehung — der Volksschule — reduziert werden sollen, das allein mit den ökonomischen Verhältnissen nicht nur der Lohnarbeiter, sondern auch der Bauern verträglich ist?
This is a program for today’s class society, not a future goal. The only feasible way to get equal education today would be to bar the higher classes from attending anything other than elementary school. Clearly, this is not what is meant. Which leaves the question: what do they mean with this point?

“Universal compulsory school attendance. Free instruction.” The former exists even in Germany, the second in Switzerland and in the United States in the case of elementary schools. If in some states of the latter country higher education institutions are also “free,” that only means in fact defraying the cost of education of the upper classes from the general tax receipts. Incidentally, the same holds good for “free administration of justice” demanded under A, 5. The administration of criminal justice is to be had free everywhere; that of civil justice is

concerned almost exclusively with conflicts over property and hence affects almost exclusively the possessing classes. Are they to carry on their litigation at the expense of the national coffers?

Regarding elementary education, this demand is met in several countries; regarding higher education, Marx opposes spending general tax revenues to subsidize the rich. After all this negative critique of the educational demands, Marx reveals what he thinks should have been demanded:

This paragraph on the schools should at least have demanded technical schools (theoretical and practical) in combination with the elementary school.

Marx also criticizes that education should be done by the state. The state should specify, by law, specifications and qualifications, but it itself should not do the educating. Instead, Marx quips, the state of the Prusso-German Empire is in need of a “stern education by the people.”
“Elementary education by the state” is altogether objectionable. Defining by a general law the expenditures on the elementary schools, the qualifications of the teaching staff, the branches of instruction, etc., and, as is done in the United States, supervising the fulfillment of these legal specifications by state inspectors, is a very different thing from appointing the state as the educator of the people! Government and church should rather be equally excluded from any influence on the school. Particularly, indeed, in the Prusso-German Empire (and one should not take refuge in the rotten subterfuge that one is speaking of a “state of the future”; we have seen how matters stand in this respect) the state has need, on the contrary, of a very

30:6/o Ganz verwerflich ist eine „Volkserziehung durch den Staat“. Durch ein allgemeines Gesetz die Mittel der Volksschulen bestimmen, die Qualifizierung des Lehrpersonals, die Unterrichtszweige etc., und, wie es in den Vereinigten Staaten geschieht, durch Staatsinspektoren die Erfüllung dieser gesetzlichen Vorschriften überwachen, ist etwas ganz andres, als den Staat zum Volkserzieher zu ernennen! Vielmehr sind Regierung und Kirche gleichmäßig von jedem Einfluß auf die Schule auszuschließen. Im preußisch-deutschen Reich nun gar (und man helfe sich nicht mit der faulen Ausflucht, daß man von einem „Zukunftsstaat“ spricht; wir haben gesehen, welche Bewandtnis es damit hat) bedarf umgekehrt der Staat
stern education by the people.

The question arises here whether Marx is conflating state and government.

But the whole program, for all its democratic clang, is tainted through and through by the Lassallean sect’s servile belief in the state, or, what is no better, by a democratic belief in miracles; or rather it is a compromise between these two kinds of belief in miracles, both equally remote from socialism.

“Freedom of science” says a paragraph of the Prussian Constitution. Why, then, here?

“Freedom of conscience”! If one desired, at this time of the Kulturkampf to remind liberalism of its old catchwords, it surely could have been done only in the following

31:1 Doch das ganze Programm, trotz alles demokratischen Geklingels, ist durch und durch vom Untertanenglauben der Lassalleschen Sekte an den Staat verpestet oder, was nicht besser, vom demokratischen Wunderglauben, oder vielmehr ist es ein Kompromiß zwischen diesen zwei Sorten, dem Sozialismus gleich fernen, Wunderglauben.

31:2 „Freiheit der Wissenschaft“ lautet ein Paragraph der preußischen Verfassung. Warum also hier?

31:3 „Gewissensfreiheit“! Wollte man zu dieser Zeit des Kulturkampfes dem Liberalismus seine alten Stichworte zu Gemüt führen, so konnte es doch nur in dieser Form
form: Everyone should be able to attend his religious as well as his bodily needs without the police sticking their noses in. But the Workers’ party ought, at any rate in this connection, to have expressed its awareness of the fact that bourgeois “freedom of conscience” is nothing but the toleration of all possible kinds of religious freedom of conscience, and that it rather strives to free the conscience from the witchery of religion. But one chooses not to transgress the “bourgeois” level.

I have now come to the end, for the appendix that now follows in the program does not constitute a characteristic component part of it. Hence, I can be very brief.

geschehen: Jeder muß seine religiöse wie seine leibliche Notdurft verrichten können, ohne daß die Polizei ihre Nase hineinsteckt. Aber die Arbeiterpartei mußte doch bei dieser Gelegenheit ihr Bewußtsein darüber aus sprechen, daß die bürgerliche „Gewissensfreiheit“ nichts ist außer der Duldung aller möglichen Sorten religiöser Gewissensfreiheit, und daß sie vielmehr die Gewissen vom religiösen Spuk zu befreien strebt. Man beliebt aber das „bürgerliche“ Niveau nicht zu überschreiten.

“2. Normal working day.”

In no other country has the workers’ party limited itself to such an indefinite demand, but has always fixed the length of the working day that it considers normal under the given circumstances.

↑ In view of the working-day chapter in *Capital*, this point could be much more elaborated. The capitalists are the ones who need a normalization of the working-day in order to provide a level playing field for competition between the firms. This gives an opening for the working-class to demand that this normalization leaves enough time for the workers to have a life.

“3. Restriction of female labor and prohibition of child labor.”

The standardization of the working day must include the restriction of female labor, insofar as it relates to the duration, intermissions, etc., of the working day; otherwise, it
could only mean the exclusion of female labor from branches of industry that are especially unhealthy for the female body, or are objectionable morally for the female gender. If that is what was meant, it should have been said so.

“Prohibition of child labor.” Here it was absolutely essential to state the age limit.

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

⇑ Again Marx reminds us here that the demands must be feasible. ⇩ But his vision of a socialist society also includes “an early combination of productive labor with education”:

Its realization—if it were possible—would be reactionary, since, with a strict regulation of the working time according to the different age groups and other safety
measures for the protection of children, an early combination of productive labor with education is one of the most potent means for the transformation of present-day society.

“4. State supervision of factory, workshop, and domestic industry.”

In consideration of the Prusso-German state, it should definitely have been demanded that the inspectors are to be removable only by a court of law; that any worker can have them prosecuted for neglect of duty; that they must belong to the medical profession.

“5. Regulation of prison labor.”

A petty demand in a general workers’ program. In any case, it should have been
clearly stated that there is no intention from fear of competition to allow ordinary criminals to be treated like beasts, and especially that there is no desire to deprive them of their sole means of betterment, productive labor. This was surely the least one might have expected from socialists.

“6. An effective liability law.”

It should have been stated what is meant by an “effective” liability law.

Be it noted, incidentally, that, in speaking of the normal working day, the part of factory legislation that deals with health regulations and safety measures, etc., has been overlooked. The liability law comes into operation only when these regulations are infringed.
〈In short, this appendix also is distinguished by slovenly editing.〉

*Dixi et salvavi animam meam.* [I have spoken and saved my soul.]
Bibliography