

# Law and Order

By James Connolly

**T**HE statement is often made that Socialists are opposed to Law and Order, and made by men and women who find in the belief implied in the statement a sufficient reason for withholding their support from the aggressive Socialist movement. We do not mean to propitiate that section of our critics by denying our hostility to the governmental powers that be, but we would suggest that a little calm reflection — supplemented by historical inquiry — upon the origin and uses of the terms 'Law' and 'Order' may be of use in determining whether the sanction of legality should be sufficient to protect any social or political institution from attack.

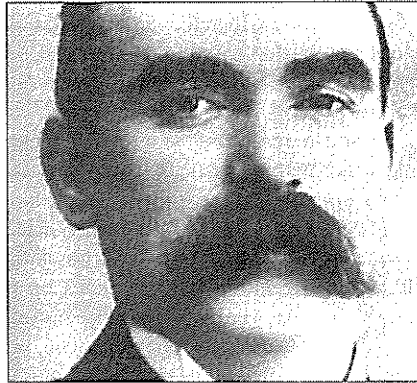
It is worth remembering in this connection that every movement for the improvement of the condition of the human race, every step forward in civilisation, has of necessity had to face the opposition of Law, and disturbed the stability of Order. The pioneer of progress has ever been an enemy of Law, and directed all his efforts to the destruction of Order. The reason is obvious.

The human race in its progress upward from savagery has had, at each upward move, to meet the opposition of the class who, thriving upon the misery of their fellows, found their security in the maintenance of the status quo and its attendant evils. This class coming together for mutual support imposed upon their weaker, or less cunning, fellows certain rules and observances calculated to weaken the power of the multitude and augment the privileges of the few.

Those rules and observances were called the Law, and in the early stages of human history, as to a lesser extent today, the majority of the race grew into the habit of accepting and even reverencing such rules or Law from the mere fact of their promulgation — especially when such promulgation dated from a period anterior to their own birth as individuals.

This blind unreasoning acceptance by the majority of rules made for their own subjection, this passive and spiritless acquiescence in the rightfulness of the social or political condition of the day, is called Order. Every proposal made by the more far-seeing and intelligent to abolish such iniquitous rules is an attack upon Law, and every effort to arouse the multitude from their state of slavish subjection and inspire them with a desire to win better conditions of life, is necessarily aimed at the disturbance of Order.

But the habit of thought engendered by the fact of so many generations having lived under the rule of Law — although that Law



may have been but the self-preserving ordinances of a tyrannical class — has given to the term 'Law' a commanding influence over the minds of men which even the friends of progress feel compelled to avail themselves of.

The first impulse of the average citizen is to yield to the uniforms and trappings with which lawmakers and administrators clothe their offices a reverence and obedience which they would by no means willingly yield to the individuals in their capacity as private citizens; in like manner the ordinances formulated by the Legislative Chamber come to the people invested with a peculiar flavour of pseudo-sanctity which they could never acquire as the mere opinions of the very mediocre gentlemen who usually frame them.

**T**HUS the reformer or revolutionist finds the line of least resistance for his party suggested to him by observing this tradition of Law. Since the people almost involuntarily obey the Law let us capture the law-making machinery, and the new ideas — obnoxious, treasonable, or heretical, and therefore looked upon with suspicion today — will appear to them in all the pomp and panoply of Law, and they will then readily conform to the new conditions.

So every discontented party in the State strove to capture the law-making machinery of the State. In this manner every class in Society, from the king to the capitalist, has successively captured political power and when enthroned in possession has legalised its own conception of Society.

Each class has had a different method of exploiting Labour, and the fight for governmental power has been a contest in which each rising class above the working class has sought to make its own peculiar manner of appropriating the products of the labour of the workers the only lawful manner. In this fight the mechanism of government has been

gradually improved and extended, and its franchises broadened down until the means of acquiring power have at last come within reach of the only remaining subject class — the workers.

The direction taken by the revolt of this class — the modern Socialist movement — has thus been determined for it by the previous history of the race; frankly confessing its hostility to Law and Order, but supplementing the avowal by the qualification that it is only against Capitalistic Law and Capitalistic Order that its hostility is directed. Like every other revolting class in the past it aims at the capture of the law-making machinery, in order that in possession of that mechanism of government it may proceed to impose its will upon the nation as an all-compelling law. But it also knows that the conquest of political power by the revolutionary working class must of necessity result in the complete transformation of the very nature of government; that the present forms of government are the reflex of a system of society based upon class rule, and presuppose the existence of two separate classes — dominant and subject, coercing and coerced.

That whereas every revolting class in the past upon the successful issue of its struggle had still a subject class below it, and therefore maintained all the coercive machinery of government in order to keep that class in its subject position, the emergence of the working class into the light of power and freedom will leave no class in the darkness of subjection.

That, therefore, the coercive functions of government will be no longer necessary, and the first duty of the revolutionary working class after the dethronement of class government, and abolition of class robbery, must be to divest the State of its power of political ruler, and place it upon its true basis of industrial administrator.

Then, when Law is the self-imposed ordinances of a free people — ordinances self-imposed in the interest of industrial efficiency and general well-being — when Order comes as a result of the harmonious working of a just social system, then Progress will find its adherents in the friends of Law, and the triumph of its ideas without disturbing the stability of Order.

But while Law remains the conservation of all the worst tyrannies imposed by man upon his fellow-man through all our long and bloody history, while Order is but a synonym for the cringing submission of spiritless slaves, the Socialist will remain an enemy of Law, and a disturber of Order.