Delivered at Forester

The Class Struggle.

Among some people it is regarded as little short of treason to speak of classes in this land of democracy, and to refer to such a thing as a class struggle is an unpardonable sin. Yet the paucity of language, and the persistant habit of calling a spade a spade forces upon us the dire necessity of committing this unpardonable sin. The condition exists and we have to describe it as best we may. The only way of avoiding this sin is to coin new words that mean the same thing. In fact , if you have ever noticed the list of officers of the Civic Federation, you will find that the whole thing is organized upon the assumption of classes and class interests in the existing order. The board of directors is divided into three groups, first those who represent the employers , or the capitalist class; second those, who represent the public, or the middle class ; and third those whom it calls the employees or in other words the laboring class. I notice that those who do not like to recognize these class distinctions which exist as facts, are just those who are not sure about their own rating. They are on the margin and live in hopes of establishing themselves higher up. They are climbers, who still worship the God of the Golden ladder, and read and tell you with pompous satisfaction of the men who have been born in honest poverty, and have died in ignominious wealth.

Therefore, supported by so "August" an authority as the civic federation , I deem it quite good form to speak of classes in American Society. One has only to read the morning paper to learn the fact of the class struggle. The whole country is in the throes of the irrepressable conflict . Moreover I think it very fair to say that in this country we get the

purest expression of the social classes of capitalism. We have no natural survivals of feudalism. Our fathers established here a comparatively pure bourgeois society in this country The institution of slavery in the south, and certain feeble attempts at aristocracy of the European feudal type, together with one or two other importations smack of feudalism or worse. But chattle slavery is formally obliterated, and the other feudal institutions have not very form hold among us. We have practically a pure capitalist social order. In European society the class lines of the capitalist order are somewhat obscured and muddled by the survivals of the older order which the growing bouegeoise supplanted. A good illustration of this is seen in the triple alliance in England of the Peerage, the Beerage and the Established Church or at least a section of it. In this country the distinctions are more clear cut. Mammon is the god who divides the sheep from the goats. At the present time they are fairly well divided, although there still remains quite a group of that decreasing middle class, whose members are not quite sure whether they are sheep with horns or goats with wool. They remind one one of a couple reeling off in a Virginia Reel. First they lock arms with one side, then with each other, and then with the other side, gayly flitting from one side to the other, and the man on the outside is unable to tell where they belong. They are the vanishing remnants of our early democracy, which the last hundred years has so changed that its fond parents would not know it. Whether we like it or not the facts of every day history, bald and cruel as they are, are demonstrating , to the amazement of an unenlightened stupid public, the growing intensity of the irrepressible conflict between the two essential classes of a capitalistic

society. This is the class struggle.

Now we get some light on the significance of this class struggle, but recalling one or two developements of history. To know how a new social order has developed out of an old in the past is of great value in judgeing the tendencies of our own time.

If you go back to feudal Europe you will find two distinct classes.On the one hand the the ruling class, the Midaeval church and state, the lords and the clergy, the owners not only of land, but of wisdom, men of authority, to whose laws, and wisdom the servile classes must submit, and from whose hands the servile class might receive what the ruling class might give. On the other hand there was the servile class whose duty it was to work and to obey, and then die. Now ir thier had always been just these two classes, who accepted the social order as it then was we should still be living under feudalism. But the funny thing about society is that it nevwr stays put. Just as soon as you think that God in his infinte widdom has arranged things in a permanent fixed relationship, and all people have to do is to stay put, somebody comes along with a new idea, and a solid substantial kich against the existing order. That is what happened just as the church and the state thought that they had arranged things according to the divine will for all times. Right in between these two classes t ere was appearing a constantly appearing men who were neither lords nor serfs. They are called freemen. They were either free laborers, or men of commercial instincts, and traders. They were becoming a power in the social order. They were organizing themselves into guilds, and societies for protection of their class interests. Let me use the language of Prof? Emerton of Harvard to describ

the developemnt of this movement. He Says,- " We have thus far dwelt cheifly upon the large class of the working opoulation which was engaged in agriculture. Other forms of manual labor were subject to similar resctrictions, but by their very nature, being independant of the land, they opened up to those who followed them a better opportunity to change their condition and ,above all things, to unite for the advancement of their class interests. The developement of the industrial and trading classes will,therefore,furnish us with the best thread of connection between the mass of isolated and defenseless laborers in the country and the thoroughly organized and politically powerful corporations of the free cities. Politically speak ng the common laborer, servile or free, had no existance. The most he could gain, under the most favorable conditions, was a tolerable living and the right to a small margin of the profit of his toil. He becomes an effective part of the body social and political only when he combines with others of his kind and gains the power to resist encroachments upon what he calls his rights. But it must be remembered that the basis of right on the side of the lord, as of the subject, was purely customary, and that the custom was frequently fixed only by the repitition of an act of aggressiveness on the one side or of seccessful resistance on the other.

" If we go back to the beginninga of our period, we find the artisan, generally servile, grouped together under the eye of the seignor to whom the product of their labor belongs and who is bound by custom to allow them such portion of the profit as is necessary to keep them alive and productive. They are,like the field serf,raised but one stage above the true slave. Gradually they emerge from this con-

dition, partly by means of emancipation, but cheifly by forming themselves into communities, very little organized at first, but still able to deal with the seignor as one power with another. Step by step these organizations become more complete until the rpocess culminates in the great free city, which enters into the highest class of political elements on an equality."

Thus we have described for us the beginnings of the great bourgeouise society. You will note that it did not come as a struggle between the two existing classes as such, but as a struggle between the existing social order and the growing of the bourgeois. They served as an entering wedge between the two established classes. They were neither the one nor the other . They belonged to a social order not yet established.

Since that time this third estate, the commoners, or the bourgoisie, or the great middle class as it is called has been attacking one stronghold after another of feudalism working towards the establishment of the principles upon which it is founded. In England we are witnessing the attempt to do away with a useless survival of feudalism. So in the process of time the growth of the new social order which recognizes neither lord nor serf, has left behind all the vital elements of feudalism . The remainder are destined to the ash-heap.

Now you will note that the third estate which was thus forceing its way in between the lords and serfs, and destroying feudalism, was composed of two elements, the free laborer, and the industrial or commercial man. At the same time that this body of commoners were waging a common struggle against the principles and facts of feudalism, they were also developing within their own ranks two classes

In o5her words the great middle class , which had come into being as a new xxxx social order as feudalism was dieing out, was itself becoming divided. Industry was the essential basis of this modern order,as land had been the basis of the old. The developement of the last hundred years or so, has witnessed the almost complete classefication of the bourgeois society into the employers and employees, into laborers, and capitalists. That reclassefication has long since become a fact. In England and other European countries in addition to the laboring classes, and capitalists, you have alsoma survival of the feudal times. The political parties in England are at this time a good picture of class conditions.

Now as I said some time ago, in this country we have and have always had the pruest type of capitalist society. Our earliest settlers were so predominantly of the middle class, that attempts at class distinction in this country, based upon feudal ideas have been but hopeless failures. We really have a deep seated feeling aginst any such basis of x class distinction. Feudalism is far from us. When you here x hear people to-day say that we have no classes here, they xx simply mean that we have no feudal classes. The Revolution of 1775, and the civil war ended that attempt to still hold us as a part of European society. So we have developed here comparatively free from the complications of European countries. We are a capitalistic society.It is at once our advantage and our disatvantage.

Now the situation of American society to-day is dramatically illustrated by the situation in Philadelphia. Conditions among us develope without very many peoples knowing what is going on until the thing is done. A hundred years ag o there was a comparatively large middle class, men who were

comparatively speaking independent people. There were a few men of wealth, but they were not ~~xxxxxxx~~ sufficiently powerful to control affairs. There was a small class habitual laborers. But wince that time things have changed. We now have a large class of laborers, whose only wealth is their earning power as workmen, and few household goods. They own no marketable property. They are at the mercy of conditions. We have a rapidly decreasing middle class, which is being shorn of its influemce every day, and we have a rapidly concentrating employing class, in whose hands the commercial and political powers of the nations now is. This employing class own the ~~xxxxx xx~~ tools of production, and the means of distribution. They capitalize the laborers state of helplessness, and take advantage of his weakness and exploit him. It is fast reducing itself to a fight for bread and butter. The employing class control or at least influence the machinery of government in the ~~xxxxx~~ interests of its own class. The low rate of wages, the uncertainty of employment, the increasing cost of living, all conspire to reduce the standard of living for a rapidly increasing proportion of our pppulation, and tend to ~~render these people~~ make these people wage serfs, dependant upon the will of the employer for their well being. Noww all these relationships are well set forth in the Philadelphia strike. On the one hand we have a corporation, enjoying a monopoly in a public service franchise, entering into a corrupt bargain with the city government. There is your capitalist class. On the other hand, you have the workers struggling for the means of living. It is no longer a question of a little misubderstanding between one employer, and a few workmen, but it is as is evidenced by the tremendous number of strikes that are now in operation and have been going on throughout the country during the past year, a class struggle. The struggle is over the

profits of production. Meanwhile not only are the profits destroyed but the production itslef. The conflict bwtween these two antagonostic parties is increasing in bitterness, and intensity. On the one hand we have organized labor, and on the other hand organized capital. They are constantly pressing each other for advantage. They now face each other on the basis of war. At best the armed truce is all can be said to exist in timew of peace.

Now into the midst comes the socialist, who says that all this fighting over the prifits of production is but an endless bickering frought with permanent struggle. In order to end this struggle it is necessary for the means of production, and distribution, which control the profits, to be socially owned, and socially operated. Profits are not an essential factor in production. The necessites of life as least must be produced for use and not for exploitation.

In other words the socialist calls for the logical and inevitable step in the evolutioj of society, the socialization or democratization of industry, just as at a former time,men called for the democratization of the power of gövernemnt.