

'Abdu'l-Bahá's address to Socialists and Labor leaders...

'Abdu'l-Bahá

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'Abdu'l-Bahá's address to Socialists and Labor leaders in Coronation Hall

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It seems as though all creatures can exist singly and alone. For example, a tree can exist solitary and alone on a given prairie or in a valley or on the mountainside. An animal upon a mountain or a bird soaring in the air might live a solitary life. They are not in need of cooperation or solidarity. Such animated beings enjoy the greatest comfort and happiness in their respective solitary lives.

On the contrary, man cannot live singly and alone. He is in need of continuous cooperation and mutual help. For example, a man living alone in the wilderness will eventually starve. He can never, singly and alone, provide himself with all the necessities of existence. Therefore, he is in need of cooperation and reciprocity. The mystery of this phenomenon, the cause thereof is this: that mankind has been created from one single origin, has branched off from one family. Thus, in reality, all mankind represents one family. God has not created any difference. He has created all as one that thus this family might live in perfect happiness and well-being.

Regarding reciprocity and cooperation, each member of the body politic should live in the utmost comfort and welfare because each individual member of humanity is a member of the body politic, and if one member is in distress or is afflicted with some disease, all the other members must necessarily suffer. For example, a member of the human organism is the eye. If the eye should be affected, that affliction would affect the whole nervous system. Hence, if a member of the body politic becomes afflicted, in



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reality, from the standpoint of sympathetic connection, all will share that affliction since this [one afflicted] is a member of the group of members, a part of the whole. Is it possible for one member or part to be in distress and the other members to be at ease? It is impossible! Hence, God has desired that in the body politic of humanity each one shall enjoy perfect welfare and comfort.

Although the body politic is one family, yet, because of lack of harmonious relations some members are comfortable and some in direst misery; some members are satisfied and some are hungry; some members are clothed in most costly garments and some families are in need of food and shelter. Why? Because this family lacks the necessary reciprocity and symmetry. This household is not well arranged. This household is not living under a perfect law. All the laws which are legislated do not ensure happiness. They do not provide comfort. Therefore, a law must be given to this family by means of which all the members of this family will enjoy equal well-being and happiness.

Is it possible for one member of a family to be subjected to the utmost misery and to abject poverty and for the rest of the family to be comfortable? It is impossible unless those members of the family be senseless, atrophied, inhospitable, unkind. Then they would say, "Though these members do belong to our family, let them alone. Let us look after ourselves. Let them die. So long as I am comfortable, I am honored, I am happy — this, my brother — let him die. If he be in misery, let him remain in misery, so long as I am comfortable. If he is hungry, let him remain so; I am satisfied. If he is without clothes, so long as I am clothed, let him remain as he is. If he is shelterless, homeless, so long as I have a home, let him remain in the wilderness."

Such utter indifference in the human family is due to lack of control, to lack of a working law, to lack of kindness in its midst. If kindness had been shown to the members of this family, surely all the members thereof would have enjoyed comfort and happiness.

Bahá'u'lláh has given instructions regarding every one of the questions confronting humanity. He has given teachings and instructions with regard to every one of the problems with which man struggles. Among them are [the teachings] concerning the question of economics, that all the members of the body politic may enjoy through the working out of this solution the greatest happiness, welfare and comfort without any harm or injury attacking the general order of things. Thereby no difference or dissension will occur. No sedition or contention will take place. This solution is this:

First and foremost is the principle that to all the members of the body politic shall be given the greatest achievements of the world of humanity. Each one shall have the utmost welfare and well-being. To solve this problem we must begin with the farmer; there will we lay a foundation for system and order because the peasant class and the

agricultural class exceed other classes in the importance of their service. In every village there must be established a general storehouse which will have a number of revenues.

The first revenue will be that of the tenth or tithes.

The second revenue [will be derived] from the animals.

The third revenue, from the minerals; that is to say, every mine prospected or discovered, a third thereof will go to this vast storehouse.

The fourth is this: whosoever dies without leaving any heirs, all his heritage will go to the general storehouse.

Fifth, if any treasures shall be found on the land, they should be devoted to this storehouse.

All these revenues will be assembled in this storehouse.

As to the first, the tenths or tithes: We will consider a farmer, one of the peasants. We will look into his income. We will find out for instance, what is his annual revenue and also what are his expenditures. Now, if his income be equal to his expenditures, from such a farmer nothing whatever will be taken. That is, he will not be subjected to taxation of any sort, needing as he does all his income. Another farmer may have expenses running up to one thousand dollars, we will say, and his income is two thousand dollars. From such an one a tenth will be required, because he has a surplus. But if his income be ten thousand dollars and his expenses one thousand dollars or his income twenty thousand dollars, he will have to pay as taxes, one fourth. If his income be one hundred thousand dollars, and his expenses five thousand, one third will he have to pay because he has still a surplus since his expenses are five thousand and his income one hundred thousand. If he pays, say, thirty-five thousand dollars, in addition to the expenditure of five thousand he still has sixty thousand left. But if his expenses be ten thousand and his income two hundred thousand, then he must give an even half because ninety thousand will be in that case the sum remaining. Such a scale as this will determine allotment of taxes. All the income from such revenues will go to this general storehouse.

Then there must be considered such emergencies as follows: A certain farmer whose expenses run up to ten thousand dollars and whose income is only five thousand will receive necessary expenses from the storehouse. Five thousand dollars will be allotted to him so he will not be in need.

Then the orphans will be looked after, all of whose expenses will be taken care of. The cripples in the village — all their expenses will be looked after. The poor in the village — their necessary expenses will be defrayed. And other members who for valid reasons

are incapacitated — the blind, the old, the deaf — their comfort must be looked after. In the village no one will remain in need or in want. All will live in the utmost comfort and welfare. Yet no schism will assail the general order of the body politic.

Hence, the expenses or expenditures of the general storehouse are now made clear and its activities made manifest. The income of this general storehouse has been shown. Certain trustees will be elected by the people in a given village to look after these transactions. The farmers will be taken care of, and, if after all these expenses are defrayed, any surplus is found in the storehouse, it must be transferred to the national treasury.

This system is all thus ordered so that in the village the very poor will be comfortable, the orphans will live happily and well; in a word, no one will be left destitute. All the individual members of the body politic will thus live comfortably and well.

For larger cities, naturally, there will be a system on a larger scale. Were I to go into that solution the details thereof would be very lengthy.

The result of this [system] will be that each individual member of the body politic will live most comfortably and happily under obligation to no one. Nevertheless, there will be preservation of degree because in the world of humanity there must needs be degrees. The body politic may well be likened to an army. In this army there must be a general, there must be a sergeant, there must be a marshal, there must be the infantry; but all must enjoy the greatest comfort and welfare.

God is not partial and is no respecter of persons. He has made provision for all. The harvest comes forth for everyone. The rain showers upon everybody and the heat of the sun is destined to warm everyone. The verdure of the earth is for everyone. Therefore, there should be for all humanity the utmost happiness, the utmost comfort, the utmost well-being.

But if conditions are such that some are happy and comfortable and some in misery, some are accumulating exorbitant wealth and others are in dire want — under such a system it is impossible for man to be happy and impossible for him to win the good pleasure of God. God is kind to all. The good pleasure of God consists in the welfare of all the individual members of mankind.

A Persian king was one night in his palace, living in the greatest luxury and comfort. Through excessive joy and gladness he addressed a certain man, saying, "Of all my life this is the happiest moment. Praise be to God, from every point prosperity appears and fortune smiles! My treasury is full and the army is well taken care of. My palaces are many; my land unlimited; my family is well off; my honor and sovereignty are great. What more could I want?"

The poor man at the gate of his palace spoke out, saying: "O kind king! Assuming that you are from every point of view so happy, free from every worry and sadness, do you not worry for us? You say that on your own account you have no worries, but do you never worry about the poor in your land? Is it becoming or meet that you should be so well off and we in such dire want and need? In view of our needs and troubles, how can you rest in your palace, how can you even say that you are free from worries and sorrows? As a ruler you must not be so egoistic as to think of yourself alone, but you must think of those who are your subjects. When we are comfortable, then you will be comfortable; when we are in misery, how can you, as a king, be in happiness?"

The purport is this, that we are all inhabiting one globe of earth. In reality we are one family, and each one of us is a member of this family. We must all be in the greatest happiness and comfort, under a just rule and regulation which is according to the good pleasure of God, thus causing us to be happy, for this life is fleeting.

If man were to care for himself only he would be nothing but an animal, for only the animals are thus egoistic. If you bring a thousand sheep to a well to kill nine hundred and ninety-nine, the one remaining sheep would go on grazing, not thinking of the others and worrying not at all about the lost, never bothering that its own kind had passed away, or had perished or been killed. To look after one's self only is, therefore, an animal propensity. It is the animal propensity to live solitary and alone. It is the animal proclivity to look after one's own comfort. But man was created to be a man — to be fair, to be just, to be merciful, to be kind to all his species, never to be willing that he himself be well off while others are in misery and distress. This is an attribute of the animal and not of man. Nay, rather, man should be willing to accept hardships for himself in order that others may enjoy wealth; he should enjoy trouble for himself that others may enjoy happiness and well-being. This is the attribute of man. This is becoming of man. Otherwise man is not man — he is less than the animal.

The man who thinks only of himself and is thoughtless of others is undoubtedly inferior to the animal because the animal is not possessed of the reasoning faculty. The animal is excused; but in man there is reason, the faculty of justice, the faculty of mercifulness. Possessing all these faculties, he must not leave them unused. He who is so hard-hearted as to think only of his own comfort, such an one will not be called man.

Man is he who forgets his own interests for the sake of others. His own comfort he forfeits for the well-being of all. Nay, rather, his own life must he be willing to forfeit for the life of mankind. Such a man is the honor of the world of humanity. Such a man is the glory of the world of mankind. Such a man is the one who wins eternal bliss. Such a man is near to the threshold of God. Such a man is the very manifestation of eternal happiness. Otherwise, men are like animals, exhibiting the same proclivities and propensities as the world of animals. What distinction is there? What prerogatives,

what perfection? None whatever! Animals are better even thinking only of themselves and negligent of the needs of others.

Consider how the greatest men in the world — whether among prophets or philosophers — all have forfeited their own comfort, have sacrificed their own pleasure for the well-being of humanity. They have sacrificed their own lives for the body politic. They have sacrificed their own wealth for that of the general welfare. They have forfeited their own honor for the honor of mankind. Therefore, it becomes evident that this is the highest attainment for the world of humanity.

We ask God to endow human souls with justice so that they may be fair, and may strive to provide for the comfort of all, that each member of humanity may pass his life in the utmost comfort and welfare. Then this material world will become the very paradise of the Kingdom, this elemental earth will be in a heavenly state and all the servants of God will live in the utmost joy, happiness and gladness. We must all strive and concentrate all our thoughts in order that such happiness may accrue to the world of humanity.

The question of socialization is very important. It will not be solved by strikes for wages. All the governments of the world must be united and organize an assembly the members of which should be elected from the parliaments and the nobles of the nations. These must plan with utmost wisdom and power so that neither the capitalist suffer from enormous losses nor the laborers become needy. In the utmost moderation they should make the law; then announce to the public that the rights of the working people are to be strongly preserved. Also the rights of the capitalists are to be protected. When such a general plan is adopted by the will of both sides, should a strike occur, all the governments of the world collectively should resist it. Otherwise, the labor problem will lead to much destruction, especially in Europe. Terrible things will take place.

For instance, the owners of properties, mines and factories should share their incomes with their employees and give a fairly certain percentage of their products to their workingmen in order that the employees may receive, beside their wages, some of the general income of the factory so that the employee may strive with his soul in the work.

No more trusts will remain in the future. The question of the trusts will be wiped away entirely. Also, every factory that has ten thousand shares will give two thousand shares of these ten thousand to its employees and will write the shares in their names, so that they may have them, and the rest will belong to the capitalists. Then at the end of the month or year whatever they may earn after the expenses and wages are paid, according to the number of shares, should be divided among both. In reality, so far great injustice has befallen the common people. Laws must be made because it is impossible for the laborers to be satisfied with the present system. They will strike every

month and every year. Finally, the capitalists will lose. In ancient times a strike occurred among the Turkish soldiers. They said to the government: "Our wages are very small and they should be increased." The government was forced to give them their demands. Shortly afterwards they struck again. Finally all the incomes went to the pockets of the soldiers to the extent that they killed the king, saying: "Why didst thou not increase the income so that we might have received more?"

It is impossible for a country to live properly without laws. To solve this problem rigorous laws must be made, so that all the governments of the world will be the protectors thereof.

In the Bolshevistic principles equality is effected through force. The masses who are opposed to the people of rank and to the wealthy class desire to partake of their advantages.

But in the divine teachings equality is brought about through a ready willingness to share. It is commanded as regards wealth that the rich among the people, and the aristocrats should, by their own free will and for the sake of their own happiness, concern themselves with and care for the poor. This equality is the result of the lofty characteristics and noble attributes of mankind.

