Excerpts below from in the Dec. 25, 1873 issue of The Chicago Daily Tribune.

**MANIFESTO OF THE COMMUNISTS.**

The Social-Politische Arbeiter-Verein of this city has republished, and accepts as its creed, the "Manifesto of the Communist Party," issued in 1848.

This manifesto, a sixteen-page pamphlet, begins with the statement that the history of all society is that of wars between classes. Feudalism gave way to the bourgeoisie, which signifies the manufacturing, trading, and transporting classes. At present these class contests are simplified, and on one side is the bourgeoisie, on the other the proletariat, the modern laborer. The impending struggle is between these two, and in the end the latter must conquer.

Then the manifesto continues:

What position do the Communists occupy toward the proletariat? The Communists are no special party, opposing other workingmen's organizations. They have no interests distinct from those of the entire proletariat. They set up no special principles on which they wish to mould the proletariat movement.

The Communists are distinguished from the other proletariat parties only by the fact that on one side they want to develop the interests of the entire proletariat as a whole, distinct from different national contests, and on the other side that, in the different stages of development which run through the fight between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, they always represent the interest of the whole movement. Consequently the Communists are the most decided, most progressive portion of the working party of all lands.

The next aim of the Communists is the same as that of all other proletariat parties—the formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois rule, and gaining political power through the proletariat. The theoretical doctrines of the Communists do not depend upon the ideas and principles which have been invented or discovered by this or that benefactor of the world; they are only the general expression of the actual relations of an existing class war, of an historical movement going on under our own eyes.

The abolition of the existing system of property is not the sole thing which distinguishes Communism. All systems of property are subservient to a constant change. The French Revolution, for instance, did away with the feudal system. That which distinguishes Communism is not the abolition of property in general, but the abolition of the present system of property.

But this modern system of private ownership of property is the last and fullest expression of the creation and appropriation of products, resting on the opposition of classes, on the utilization of the one through the other. In this sense, the Communists can sum up their theory in the one expression—abolition of private ownership property.

They have reproached us communists with desiring to do away with the ownership of what a person has himself earned and worked for—that ownership which is the basis of all personal freedom, activity, and independence. Do you speak of the modern system of private property? But does the hired labor, the labor of the proletariat, gain him property? Not at all. It creates capital; that is to say, that form of property which plundered hired labor, and which can increase only on the condition that it creates new hired labor in order to plunder it anew.

Property in its present form depends on the opposition of capital to hired labor. Let us look at both sides of this thing. To be a capitalist means to have not merely a purely personal but social position in relation to production. Capital is a common product, and can only be put in motion by the common activity of many members; yes, in the last instance, only by the common activity of all the members of society. Thus, capital is not a personal, but a social power. Thus, when capital becomes transformed into a common property belonging to all the members of society, personal property is not changed into common property. It loses its class character.

Now we come to hired labor. The average reward of labor amounts to the price of those means of subsistence which are necessary to keep the laborer alive as a laborer. Thus what the hired laborer acquires by his activity merely suffices to support life. We do not wish to do away with this personal appropriation.
of the products of labor for the support of life—an appropriation which leaves nothing which can give power over the labor of others; we only wish to do away with the contemptible character of this appropriation, whereby the laborer only lives in order to increase capital,—only lives so far as the interest of the ruling class demands.

In society at present, living labor is only a means whereby to increase accumulated labor. In the communist society, accumulated labor is only a means of advancing, enriching, and widening the life of the laborer.

Thus, in the present form of society, the past rules the present; in the communistic, the present the past. In the present form of society capital is independent and personal, while the acting individual is not independent and is impersonal.

You are horrified that we wish to abolish private ownership of property; but in your present form of society private property does not exist for nine-tenths of its members. It exists for one-tenth, by virtue of the fact that it does not exist for nine-tenths. You reproach us for desiring to abolish a form of property which presupposes, as its necessary condition, the lack of property of the immense majority of the community.

You say we wish to deprive you of your property. Certainly we do. From that moment in which labor ceases to be transformed into capital, money, ground-rents, or a monopolizing social power—from that moment when personal property cannot be used according to your present system, you assert that personality is destroyed. So you confess that under the present system you mean nothing but the bourgeoisie. This personality certainly should be done away with.

Communism simply takes away the power of subjugating the labors of others, through the appropriation of the products of the community. They have said that with the abolition of private ownership of property all activity would cease and general idleness ensue. If this were so, the present form of society must long ago have sunk to ruin, since those members of it who work gain nothing, and those who gain never work.

**Questions**

What is the bourgeoisie?

What is the proletariat?

Whom do Communists represent?

What is freedom, according to Communists?

Why do Communists think it is just to do away with bourgeois property?

How does the manifesto debunk the idea that no one would work if there were no private property?

Can you tell from the newspaper’s introduction to this excerpt what its opinion is about *The Communist Manifesto*? Go to Chronicling America at chroniclingamerica.loc.gov and search for this particular newspaper issue. Can you tell from the other articles on this page what the paper’s stance is?

The translation of *The Communist Manifesto* used here has been substantially revised by scholars in the years since this newspaper article was published. Compare in particular the first sentence of the second column with its more updated, accurate translation, available from Project Gutenberg: “The abolition of existing property relations is not at all a distinctive feature of Communism.”