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Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, [*Against Sectarianism*]¹⁰⁵

[...] According to Article I of its Statutes, the International Working Men's Association admits 'all working men's societies aiming at the same end, viz., the protection, advancement, and complete emancipation of the working classes'.

Since the various sections of workingmen in the same country, and the working classes in different countries, are placed under different circumstances and have attained to different degrees of development, it seems almost necessary that the theoretical notions which reflect the real movement should also diverge.

The community of action, however, called into life by the International Working Men's Association, the exchange of ideas facilitated by the public organs of different national section, and the direct debates at the General Congresses are sure by and by to engender a common theoretical programme.

Consequently, it belongs not to the function of the General Council to subject the programme of the Alliance to a critical examination. [...] All we have to ask is whether its general tendency does not run against the general tendency of the International Working Men's Association, viz., the complete emancipation of the working class. One phrase in your programme lies open to this objection. It occurs [in] Article 2: 'The Alliance wants above all political, economic, and social equalization of classes.'

¹⁰⁵ Extract from a text written by Karl Marx (see note 1) and Friedrich Engels (see note 47) between late January and early March 1872, entitled *Fictitious Splits in the International*. It was published in May as a 39-page brochure in French, with a print run of 2,000, by the Imprimerie coopérative de Genève. It was signed by the whole GC and contained *The General Council of the International Working Men's Association to the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy* (here also reproduced in part), which the GC had adopted at its session of 9 March 1869, and sent to the organization directed by Mikhail Bakunin after it had expressed its willingness to dissolve in order to merge with the IWMA. The full version may be found in GC, V: 356–409.

The 'equalization of classes,' literally interpreted, comes to the 'harmony of capital and labour' so persistently preached by the bourgeois socialists. It is not the logically impossible 'equalization of classes,' but the historically necessary, superseding 'abolition of classes,' this true secret of the proletarian movement, which forms the great aim of the International Working Men's Association. [...]

It suits the principles of the International Working Men's Association to let every section freely shape its own theoretical programme, except the single case of an infringement upon its general tendency. [...]

The first phase of the proletariat's struggle against the bourgeoisie is marked by a sectarian movement. That is logical at a time when the proletariat has not yet developed sufficiently to act as a class. Certain thinkers criticize social antagonisms and suggest fantastic solutions thereof, which the mass of workers is left to accept, preach, and put into practice. The sects formed by these initiators are abstentionist by their very nature – i.e., alien to all real action, politics, strikes, coalitions, or, in a word, to any united movement. The mass of the proletariat always remains indifferent or even hostile to their propaganda. The Paris and Lyon workers did not want the St-Simonists, the Fourierists, the Icarians, any more than the Chartists and the English trade unionists wanted the Owenites. These sects act as levers of the movement in the beginning, but become an obstruction as soon as the movement outgrows them; after which they became reactionary. Witness the sects in France and England, and lately the Lassalleans in Germany, who after having hindered the proletariat's organization for several years ended up becoming simple instruments of the police. To sum up, we have here the infancy of the proletarian movement, just as astrology and alchemy are the infancy of science. If the International were to be founded, it was necessary that the proletariat go through this phase.

Contrary to the sectarian organization, with their vagaries and rivalries, the International is a genuine and militant organization of the proletarian class of all countries, united in their common struggle against the capitalists and the landowners, against their class power organized in the state. The International's Rules, therefore, speak of only simple 'workers' societies,' all aiming for the same goal and accepting the same programme, which presents a general outline of the proletarian movement, while having its theoretical elaboration

to be guided by the needs of the practical struggle and the exchange of ideas in the sections, unrestrictedly admitting all shades of socialist convictions in their organs and Congresses. [...]

All socialists see anarchy as the following programme: Once the aim of the proletarian movement – i.e., abolition of classes – is attained, the power of the state, which serves to keep the great majority of producers in bondage to a very small exploiter minority, disappears, and the functions of government become simple administrative functions.

The Alliance draws an entirely different picture. It proclaims anarchy in proletarian ranks as the most infallible means of breaking the powerful concentration of social and political forces in the hands of the exploiters. Under this pretext, it asks the International, at a time when the Old World is seeking a way of crushing it, to replace its organization with anarchy. [...]