

WHAT SOCIALISM IS.

What "Unsocialism" Is.

WE English have a habit of speaking of England as if it belonged to us. We are wrong: England is now private property; and if a laboring man out of employment makes so free with "his country" as to lie down for a night's sleep on it without paying its owners for the accommodation, he is imprisoned as a rogue and a vagabond. The price we must pay rises as the population grows; for the more people there are, the higher they will bid against one another for their dwellings and places of business. In London, for instance, the price paid annually to the ground landlords for the use of the soil alone is £16,000,000; and it goes up by £311,293 every year, without counting the additional charge for new buildings, or repairs and improvements to old ones. After payments of one sort or another to the owners of the whole country have been deducted from the produce of the workers' labor, the balance left for wages is so small, that if every working-class family got an equal share, each share would come to less than £100 a year, which (though it would seem a fortune to many poor people) is not enough for a comfortable living, much less for saving. Nevertheless the proprietary classes, without working at all for it, divide among them enough to give over two hundred thousand rich families more than £1,000 a year, and still leave more than £300 a year per family for over a million and a quarter families of moderately well-off people *in addition to what they make by their professions and businesses.*

The Extreme Cases.

The above figures, bad as they are, only represent averages, and give no idea of the extreme cases of wealth and poverty. Some of our great landowners get upwards of £4,000 a week without ever doing a stroke of work for it; whilst the laborers on their estates, working early and late from the time they are lads until they go into the union as aged and worn-out paupers, get eleven shillings a week. As women get lower wages than men when they work, but receive just as large incomes from property when they are rich and idle, a comparison between the share of our yearly produce that goes to a poor working woman at the East end of London, working sixteen hours a day for a shilling, and the rich, idle lady at the West end, is still more startling. If you doubt these statements, read Fabian Tract No. 5, "Facts for Socialists," in which you will find hundreds of the most terrible figures concerning the misery caused by our present social system, with full references to standard authorities for every one of them.

What Comes of Inequality.

If you are a person of common sense and natural feeling, you must have often thought over these inequalities and their cruel in-

justice. If you are rich, you perhaps think that inequality is a good thing—that it fosters a spirit of emulation, and prevents things from stagnating at a dead level. But if you are poor, you must know well that when inequality is so outrageous as the figures above shew, it fosters nothing but despair, recklessness and drunkenness among the very poor; arrogance and wastefulness among the very rich; meanness, envy and snobbery among the middle classes. Poverty means disease and crime, ugliness and brutality, drink and violence, stunted bodies and unenlightened minds. Riches heaped up in idle hands mean flunkeyism and folly, insolence and servility, bad example, false standards of worth, and the destruction of all incentive to useful work in those who are best able to educate themselves for it. Poverty and riches together mean the misuse of our capital and industry for the production of frippery and luxury whilst the nation is rotting for want of good food, thorough instruction, and wholesome clothes and dwellings for the masses. What we want in order to make true progress is more bakers, more schoolmasters, more woolweavers and tailors, and more builders: what we get instead is more footmen, more gamekeepers, more jockeys, and more prostitutes. That is what our newspapers call “sound political economy.” What do you think of it? Do you intend to do anything to get it remedied?

No Remedy without Political Change.

The produce of industry has been increased enormously during this last century by machinery, railways, and division of labor. But the first cost of machinery, railways and factories has to be paid out of savings, and not out of the money that people are living on. Now the only people who can spare money to save are those who have more than enough to live on: that is to say, the rich. Consequently the machinery has been introduced, and the factories built out of the savings of the rich; and as they paid for it (with money made by the labor of the poor), they expect to get all the advantage that comes by using it; so that here again the workers are left as badly off as ever. The worst of it is that when the rich find how easily they get still richer by saving, they think it is as easy for everybody as for themselves; and when the worker complains, they say, “Why don't you save as we do?” or “How can you expect to be well off if you are not thrifty?” They forget that though you can save plenty out of £18 a week without stinting your family, you cannot save anything out of eighteen shillings without starving them. Nothing can help the poor except political change from bad social institutions to good ones.

The Three Monopolies.

Moreover the propertied classes, by giving their sons an expensive education, are able to put them into the learned professions and the higher managerial posts in business, over the heads of the wage-workers, who are too poor to get more than the Board School standards for their children. So that out of the price paid for the use of the land, the propertied classes save capital; and out of the profits of the capital they buy the education which gives to their working members a monopoly of the highly paid employments; whilst the wage-workers are hopelessly cut out of it all. Here are the figures for the United Kingdom:—

*Income of Propertied Classes (10,500,000 persons)	£ 920,000,000
„ left for Wage-workers (26,500,000 „)	530,000,000
Total National Income	£ 1,450,000,000

This means that the rich are masters of the wage-workers, because the whole country is governed by the House of Commons, the County Councils and Municipal Corporations, and only rich men can afford to give their time for nothing to these bodies, or to pay the heavy expenses of getting elected to them. The workman's vote enables him to choose between one rich man and another, but not to fill the Councils and Parliament with men of his own class. Thus the poor keep the rich up; and the rich keep the poor down; and it will always be so whilst the land and the machinery from which the nation's subsistence is produced remains in the hands of a class instead of in the hands of the nation as a whole.

What Socialism Is.

Socialism is a plan for securing equal rights and opportunities for all. The Socialists are trying to have the land and machinery gradually "socialized," or made the property of the whole people, in order to do away with idle owners, and to win the whole product for those whose labor produces it. The establishment of Socialism, when once the people are resolved upon it, is not so difficult as might be supposed. If a man wishes to work on his own account, the rent of his place of business, and the interest on the capital needed to start him, can be paid to the County Council of his district just as easily as to the private landlord and capitalist. Factories are already largely regulated by public inspectors, and can be conducted by the local authorities just as gas-works, water-works and tramways are now conducted by them in various towns. Railways and mines, instead of being left to private companies, can be carried on by a department under the central government, as the postal and telegraph services are carried on now. The Income Tax collector who to-day calls for a tax of a few pence in the pound on the income of the idle millionaire, can collect a tax of twenty shillings in the pound on every unearned income in the country if the State so orders. Remember that Parliament, with all its faults, has always governed the country in the interest of the class to which the majority of its members belonged. It governed in the interest of the country gentlemen in the old days when they were in a majority in the House of Commons; it has governed in the interests of the capitalists and employers since they won a majority by the Reform Bill of 1832; and it will govern in the interest of the people when the majority is selected from the wage-earning class. Inquirers will find that Socialism can be brought about in a perfectly constitutional manner, and that none of the practical difficulties which occur to everyone in his first five minutes' consideration of the subject have escaped the attention of those who have worked at it for years. Few now believe Socialism to be impracticable except those with whom the wish is father to the thought.

* This item is made up of five hundred and ten millions (£510,000,000) which go as Rent and Interest absolutely for nothing, and of four hundred and ten millions (£410,000,000) incomes of professional men and profits of business management. (See Fabian Tract No. 5, "Facts for Socialists." One penny.)

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