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THE FABIAN SOCIETY

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## English Progress towards Social Democracy.

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HERE are three stages through which every new notion in England has to pass: It is impossible: It is against the Bible: We knew it before. Socialism is rapidly reaching the third of these stages. "We are all Socialists now," said one of Her Majesty's late Ministers; and, in sober truth, there is no anti-Socialist political party. That which has long formed part of the unconscious basis of our practice is now formulated as a definite theory, and the tide of Democratic Collectivism is rolling in upon us. All the authorities, whatever their own views, can but note its rapid progress. If we look back along the line of history, we see the irresistible sweep of the growing tendency: if we turn to contemporary industrial development, it is there: if we fly to biological science, we do not escape the lesson: on all sides the sociologic evolution compels our adherence. There is no resting place for stationary Toryism in the scientific universe. The whole history of the human race cries out against the old-fashioned Individualism.

Economic Science, at any rate, will now have none of it. When the Editor of the new issue of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* lately required from some eminent Economist an article on Political Economy, fully representing the present position of that science, it was to an avowed Socialist that he addressed himself, and the article took the form of an elaborate survey of the inevitable convergence of all the economic tendencies towards Socialism.† Professor Alfred Marshall's new work‡ will be as repugnant to Mr. Herbert Spencer and the Liberty and Property Defence League as John Stuart Mill's conversion was to his respectable friends. Have we not seen Professor Sidgwick, that most careful of men, contributing an article to the *Contemporary Review*,\*\* to prove that the main principles of Socialism are a plain deduction from accepted economic doctrines, and in no way opposed to them?

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\* A Lecture delivered by Sidney Webb before the Sunday Lecture Society, London, 1888, of which a report was previously published under the title of "The Progress of Socialism."

† Since republished as a "History of Political Economy," by Dr. J. K. Ingram.

‡ Principles of Economics. Vol. I. (Macmillan, 1890.)

\*\* "Economic Socialism," *Contemporary Review*, Nov., 1886.



Indeed, those who remember John Stuart Mill's emphatic adhesion to Socialism, both the name and the thing, in his "Autobiography,"\* cannot be surprised at this tendency of economists. The only wonder is, that interested defenders of economic monopoly are still able to persuade the British public that Political Economy is against Socialism, and are able to make even Bishops believe that its laws "forbid" anything save the present state of things.

It is, however, time to give a plain definition of Socialism, to prevent any mistake as to meanings. Nothing is more common than the statement, "I can't understand what Socialism is." But this is sheer intellectual laziness. The word is to be found in our modern dictionaries. The Encyclopædia Britannica contains exhaustive articles upon its every aspect. There are enough Socialist lectures in London every week, good, bad, and indifferent, to drive the meaning into every willing ear.

The abstract word "Socialism" denotes a particular principle of social organisation. We may define this principle either from the constitutional or the economic standpoint. We may either put it as "the control by the community of the means of production for public advantage, instead of for private profit," or "the absorption of rent and interest by the community collectively." Its opposite is the abandonment of our means of production to the control of competing private individuals, stimulated by the prospect of securing the rent and interest gratuitously.

But this definition does not satisfy some people. They want a complete description of a Socialist State, an elaborately worked out, detailed plan, like Sir Thomas More's "Utopia" or Gulliver's Travels. Such fancy sketches have, indeed, at times been thrown off by Socialists as by all other thinkers; but with the growing realisation of social evolution, men gradually cease to expect the fabrication of a perfect and final social state; and the dreams of Fourier and Cabet, like those of Godwin and Comte, become outworn and impossible to us. There will never come a moment when we can say, "Now let us rest, for Socialism is established:" any more than we say, "Now Radicalism is established." The true principles of social organisation must already have secured partial adoption, as a condition of the continuance of every existing social organism; and the progress of Socialism is but their more complete recognition and their conscious adoption as the lines upon which social improvement advances.

Looking back over the record of human progress, we see one main economic characteristic underlying every form of society. As soon as production is sufficiently advanced to furnish more than maintenance, there arises, wherever two or three are gathered together, a fierce struggle for the surplus product. This struggle varies in outward form according to the time and circumstances, but remains essentially the same in economic character. The indivi-



duals or classes who possess social power, have at all times, consciously or unconsciously, made use of that power in such a way as to leave to the great majority of their fellows practically nothing beyond the means of subsistence according to the current local standard. The additional product, determined by the relative differences in productive efficiency of the different sites, soils, capitals, and forms of skill above the margin of cultivation, has gone to those exercising control over these valuable but scarce productive factors. This struggle to secure the surplus or "economic rent" is the key to the confused history of European progress, and an underlying, unconscious motive of all revolutions. The student of history finds that the great world moves, like the poet's snake, on its belly.

The social power which has caused this unequal division of the worker's product has taken various forms. Beginning, probably, in open personal violence in the merely predatory stage of society, it has passed in one field, through tribal war, to political supremacy, embodied, for instance, in a "Jingo" foreign policy, and at home in vindictive class legislation. A survival in England at the present time is the severity of the punishment for trifling offences against property compared with that for personal assaults; and its effect is curiously seen when the legal respect for person and that for property are, to some extent, opposed to each other, as in the case of wife-beating.

The social power does not, however, always take the forms of physical strength or political supremacy. From the Indian medicine man and the sun-priests of Peru down to the Collector of Peter's Pence and the Treasurer of the Salvation Army, theological influences have ever been used to divert a portion of the rent to spiritual uses, often nourishing (like the meats offered to idols) whole classes of non-producers, many of whom have been of no real spiritual advantage to the community.

But by far the most important means of appropriating the surplus product has been in the organisation of labour. The industrial leader, who can oblige his fellows to organise their toil under his direction, is able thereby to cause an enormous increase in their productivity. The advantages of co-operative or associated labour were discovered long before they were described by Adam Smith or Fourier; and human history is the record of their ever-increasing adoption. Civilisation itself is nothing but an ever-widening co-operation.

But who is to get the benefit of the increased productivity? In all times this question has been decided by the political condition of the labourer. The universally first form of industrial organisation is chattel slavery. At a certain stage in social development there seems to have been possible no other kind of industrial co-operation. The renunciation of personal independence is, as Darwin observed of the Fuegian, the initial step towards civilisation.

As a slave, the worker obtained at first nothing but bare maintenance at the lowest economic rate. Cato even advises the Roman noble that the bailiff or foreman need not have so large a ration as the other slaves, his work, though more skilled, being less



exhausting. On the other hand, the surplus value was not yet differentiated into its component economic parts, and went in an undivided stream of profit all to the master.

Advancing civilisation, itself rendered possible only by chattel slavery, gradually made this form of servitude incompatible with intellectual and moral development, and inadequate to industrial needs. The slave became the feudal serf or the tribal dependent. As a chattel he had ceded all but his maintenance to his master: as a serf he rendered to his lord three or four days' unpaid labour per week, maintaining himself on the product of the rest.

The further development of the social organism proved no more favourable to feudalism than to chattel slavery; and the modern "free labourer" came into existence. But the economic servitude of the worker did not drop off with his feudal fetters. With the chains of innate status, there disappeared also its economic privileges; and the "free labourer" found himself, especially in England, in a community where the old common rights over the soil were being gradually but effectually extinguished. He became a landless stranger in his own country.

The development of competitive production for sale, and the industrial revolution of the past century, have made subsistence dependent, not merely upon access to the land, but upon the use, in addition, of increasingly large masses of capital, at first in agriculture, then in foreign trade, then in manufacture, and now, finally, also in distributive industries. The mere worker became steadily less and less industrially independent as his legal freedom increased. From an independent producing unit, he passed into a mere item in a vast industrial army, over the organisation of which he had no control. He was free, but free only to work at the market wage or to starve. Other resource he had none; and even now the freedom to work at all is denied to many at a time for varying periods, and we have the constantly recurring phenomenon of the unemployed. When it suits any person having the use of land and capital to employ the worker, he does so only on condition that two important deductions, rent and interest, can be made from the product for the gratuitous benefit of those possessing the legal ownership of land and capital. The reward of labour being thus reduced on an average by at least one third, the remaining eightpence out of the shilling is then shared between the various classes who *have* co-operated in the production, that is, the inventor, the managing employer, and the mere wage-worker—but in the competitive struggle it is shared in such a way that at least fourpence goes to a favoured set of educated workers numbering one-fifth of the whole, leaving four-fifths to divide less than fourpence out of the shilling between them. We have the direct consequence in the social condition around us. A fortunate few, owing to their legal power over the instruments of wealth production, are able to command the services of thousands of industrial slaves whose faces they have never seen, without rendering any return whatever to them or to society. A larger body of persons contribute some labour, but are able, from their education or their cultivated ability, to choose occupations for which the competition wage is



still high, owing to the relatively small number of possible competitors. These two classes together number only one-fifth of the whole. On the other side is the great mass of the people, the weekly wage-earners, four out of every five\* of the nation, toiling perpetually for less than a third of the aggregate product of labour, at an annual wage averaging at most £35 per adult, hurried into unnecessarily early graves by the severity of their lives, and dying, as regards, at least, one-third of them, destitute or actually in receipt of poor-law relief.

When we have bound the labourer fast to his wheel ; when we have practically excluded the average man from every real chance of improving his condition ; when we have virtually denied to him the means of sharing in the higher feelings and the larger sympathies of the cultured race ; when we have shortened his life in our service, stunted his growth in our factories, racked him with unnecessary disease by our exactions, tortured his soul with that worst of all pains, the constant fear of poverty, condemned his wife and children to sicken and die before his eyes, in spite of his own perpetual round of toil—then we are aggrieved that he often loses hope, gambles for the windfall that is denied to his industry, attempts to drown his cares in drink, and, driven by his misery irresistibly down the steep hill of vice, passes into that evil circle where vice begets poverty, and poverty intensifies vice, until Society unrelentingly stamps him out as vermin. Thereupon we lay the flattering unction to our souls that it was his own fault, that he had his chance ; and we preach to his fellows thrift and temperance, prudence and virtue, but always industry, that industry of others which keeps the industrial machine in motion, so that we can still enjoy the opportunity of taxing it. Nay, so that we may not lose his labour, we keep him when we can from absolute starvation ; and when the world has taken his all, we offer him the pauper's dole. Nothing gives a more striking picture of his condition than the official statistics of our pauperism. We have clogged our relief with irksome and humiliating conditions, so that the poor often die lingering deaths rather than submit to them. Yet there is a class in receipt of this bitter bread during any one year, numbering between three and four millions, one in ten of the whole population, one in eight of the wage-earning class. In some rural districts every aged labourer is a pauper. Of all persons over 70 years of age, 40 per cent. are permanent paupers. When the Queen in June, 1888, passed in review the whole population of London, she may, perhaps, have reflected that for one in every five of that whole crowd, a pauper's death was waiting. One fifth of the population of the richest city in the world die in the workhouse or the hospital (not including recipients of outdoor relief), and the proportion for the wage-earning class alone must, of course, be much greater.†

\* Prof. Leone Levi, *Times*, 13th January, 1885 ; and see for the authorities for all these facts, "Facts for Socialists" (Fabian Tract No. 5).

† See the statistics given in "Facts for Londoners" (Fabian Tract, No. 8) ; and in article "The Reform of the Poor Law" (*Contemporary Review*, June 1890).



This is the nett result of our social arrangements after a generation of gradual *improvement*, greater, we are told, than England ever before knew. The distress is only normal. The condition of the people exhibits a marked advance in prosperity. It may be that this is true: nay, owing to the silent progress of Socialism, it probably is true; yet the problem for *us* is no lighter. Are things *now* such as we can dare to be responsible for? Let a sober, non-Socialist authority of weight answer. Mr. Frederic Harrison, writing just five years ago, said:—"To me at least, it would be " enough to condemn modern society as hardly an advance on " slavery or serfdom, if the permanent condition of industry were " to be that which we now behold, that 90 per cent. of the actual " producers of wealth have no home that they can call their own " beyond the end of a week; have no bit of soil or so much as a " room that belongs to them; have nothing of value of any kind " except as much old furniture as will go in a cart; have the pre- " carious chance of weekly wages which barely suffice to keep them " in health; are housed for the most part in places that no man " thinks fit for his horse: are separated by so narrow a margin " of destitution that a month of bad trade, sickness or unexpected " loss, brings them face to face with hunger and pauperism. . . . " . This is the normal state of the average workmen in town or " country." (Report of Industrial Remuneration Conference, 1886, p. 429).

Such then is our position to-day. Those who believe it possible that the festering evils of social ulceration can be cured without any fundamental change in property relations, rely mainly on three leading remedies, Trade Unions, Co-operation, and a general recrudescence of a Christ-like unselfishness. What does the dry light of science say to these homœopathic " pills against the earthquake " ?

The belief in universal Trade Unionism as a means of greatly and permanently raising wages all round must be at once dismissed as involving a logical fallacy. Certainly, the workers in some trades have managed to improve their economic position by strict Trade Unions. We are never allowed to forget the splendid incomes earned by these aristocrats of labour, a mere tenth of the whole labour class. But those who merely counsel the rest to go and do likewise forget that the only permanently effective Trade Union victories are won by limitation of the numbers in the particular trade, and the excluded candidates necessarily go to depress the condition of the outsiders. The Trade Unionist can usually only raise himself on the bodies of his less fortunate comrades. If all were equally strong, all would be equally powerless—a point clearly proved by Prof. Cairnes,\* and obvious to all Trade Unionists themselves.

Co-operation is a more seductive means of escape: and most social reformers cannot, even now, refrain from keeping alive lingering hopes that some solution may here be found. But a whole generation of experiment has done little more than show the futility of

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\* "Some Leading Principles of Political Economy," p. 293.



expecting real help from this quarter. Less than one four-hundredth part of the industry of the country is yet carried on by Co-operation. The whole range of industrial development in the larger industries seems against it; and no ground for hope in Co-operation as a complete answer to the social problem can be gained from economic science. It fails to deal even with the real elements of the case. It may claim to obviate competition; but, as Mill himself quotes, "the deepest root of the evils and iniquities which fill the industrial world is *not* competition, but the subjection of labour to capital, and the enormous share which the possessors of the instruments of production are able to take from the produce."\* Co-operation can make no real defence against the continuance of the exaction of this "enormous share"—rent and interest—the continued individual enjoyment of which it, indeed, actually presupposes. It affords a valuable moral training, a profitable savings bank for investments, and a temporary means of interesting the worker in the industrial affairs of his country. But ordinary joint stock investment is now rapidly outgrowing it, and is already a hundred and sixty times as great as Co-operation. Now even the most enthusiastic believer in the virtues of association will hardly expect salvation merely from a *régime* of Joint Stock Companies; and this, and not Co-operation, is clearly the line in which our industrial development is rapidly travelling, so far as all large enterprises are concerned. The final goal of many industries is, moreover, obviously not the Co-operative Society, but the municipality. Nearly twice as much capital is already invested by town councils in a single industry (gas supply) as the whole twelve millions of the accumulations of the 1,500 co-operative societies. A larger extension of "municipal industry" is made every year than the progress, great as it is, of the Co-operative industry. Already where there is most Co-operation, there is also most municipalisation. Nevertheless, it may be some time before the more enthusiastic co-operators realise the industrial tendency, or even become aware that modern economic science turns regretfully against them; yet such eminent authorities as Cliffe Leslie, Professor Walker, Mr. Leonard Courtney, and Dr. J. K. Ingram, concur in dismissing the idea of universal Co-operation as chimerical.† Nor is Co-operation really a rival of Socialism. The real import of the Co-operative movement is not profit-sharing, but the collective control of the consumer over industry; not the division of so-called "profits" among a larger number, but their elimination as far as is safely possible. Similarly, the purpose of Socialism is not the division of wealth among the poor but the assertion of the right of the community to the complete control over the means of production by which the community lives. Both movements had their rise in the inspiring propaganda of Robert Owen, which, seeming at the time to fail, had really so splendidly succeeded. Owen's advocacy of factory legislation, national education, and other measures, now rightly described as

\* "Principles of Political Economy," last edition (1865) p. 477.

† Article on "Political Economy" in Encyclopædia Britannica, by Dr. J. K. Ingram. Vol. xix, p. 382.



Socialistic in principle, led the way to the tremendous development of unconsciously Socialist legislation which has since taken place. His constant insistence on the corporate duty of the community to its individual members was really the forerunner of the successful "municipal Socialism" which our great cities have since taken up. In all these matters "consumers" co-operate as citizens. But Owen lacked the teachings of Democracy, and when his followers learnt this lesson, they turned from his kind paternalism to the "collective freedom" asserted by the Chartist movement. It was largely from the Chartist followers of Owen that the modern Co-operative movement has derived its most enduring inspiration. Many of the founders of the most successful stores had been Chartist agitators. With its completely democratic organization, its assertion of the principle of public control over industry, and its repudiation of even benevolent dictation, modern Co-operation shows its affinity, not only to Chartism, but also to modern Socialism of the English type. The two movements have not only the same ends, but also the same principle—the main idea of each being the control of industry neither by individuals nor for individuals, but by the public for the public. Both express the economic and industrial obverse of political democracy. Both recognise that political freedom can be but a mockery to the poorer worker so long as he has no control over the industry by which alone he can live. The two movements differ rather in their spheres than in their methods. No reasonable Socialist thinks it possible for the State immediately to take over the grocers' shops. The "democratisation" of retail trade, and of some other branches of industry, can, it has been triumphantly proved, be effected by the store and the "Wholesale," where neither the national government nor the local authority could yet venture to step in. On the other hand, co-operators easily recognize that there are industries for which the appropriate unit of administration is not the store, but the town council. The co-operators of Lancashire and Yorkshire have made greater strides in municipal Socialism than they have even in Co-operation. Municipal Socialism is, indeed, already twenty-five times as great as Co-operation, but its sphere lies outside that of the co-operative society, and every co-operator is bound by his principles to be also a good citizen, taking as keen an interest in the election of his town council as in that of his store committee. Nor is the National Government without its sphere in this progressive "democratisation" of industry. Co-operators need not refuse to admit that, for some services, the most convenient unit of administration is neither the store nor the town council, but the central executive. Our post office, and soon our railways, our Factory Acts and our taxation of unearned incomes, must all be national, not local. The greatest possible extension of the co-operative movement would therefore still leave an enormous sphere for both national and municipal collectivism.

There remains the ideal of the rapid spread of a Christ-like unselfishness. Of this hope let us speak with all the respect which so ancient a dream deserves. If it were realised it would, indeed,



involve an upset of present property arrangements, compared with which Socialism is a mere trifle ; yet science must perforce declare that the expectation of any but the slowest real improvement in general moral habit is absolutely without warrant. Forms of egoism may change, and moral habits vary ; but, constituted as we are, it seems inevitable for healthy personal development that an at best instructed and unconscious egoism should preponderate in the individual. It is the business of the community not to lead into temptation this healthy natural feeling, but so to develop social institutions that individual egoism is necessarily directed to promote only the well-being of all. The older writers, led by Rousseau, in the reaction against aristocratic government, saw this necessary adjustment in absolute freedom. But that crude vision has long been demolished. "It is, indeed, certain," sums up Dr. Ingram,\* "that industrial society will not permanently remain without a systematic organisation. The mere conflict of private interests will never produce a well-ordered commonwealth of labour."

Is there then no hope? Is there no chance of the worker ever being released from the incubus of what Mill called,† "the great social evil of a non-labouring class," whose monopolies cause the "taxation of the industrious for the support of indolence, if not of plunder?"‡

Mill tells us how, as he investigated more closely the history and structure of Society, he came to find a sure and certain hope in the Progress of Socialism, which he foresaw and energetically aided. We who call ourselves Socialists to-day in England, largely through Mill's teaching and example, find a confirmation of this hope in social history and economics, and see already in the distance the glad vision of a brighter day, when, practically, the whole product of labour will be the worker's and the worker's alone, and at last social arrangements will be deliberately based upon the Apostolic rule ignored by so many Christians, that if a man do not work, neither shall he eat.

But it must clearly be recognised that no mere charitable palliation of existing individualism can achieve this end. Against this complacent delusion of the philanthropist, Political Economy emphatically protests. So long as the instruments of production are in unrestrained private ownership, so long must the tribute of the workers to the drones continue : so long will the toilers' reward inevitably be reduced by their exactions. No tinkering with the Land Laws can abolish or even diminish Economic Rent. The whole series of Irish Land Acts, for instance, have not reduced its amount by a single penny, however much they have altered its distribution. The *whole* equivalent of every source of fertility or advantage of all land over and above the very worst land in use, is necessarily abstracted from the mere worker. So long as Lady Matheson can "own" the island of Lewis, and "do what she likes with her own," it is the very emphatic teaching of Political Economy that the earth

\* Encyclopædia Britannica. Vol. xix. p. 382.

+ "Principles of Political Economy," p. 455.

‡ "Principles of Political Economy," p. 477.



may be the Lord's, but the fulness thereof must, inevitably, be the landlord's.

There is an interesting episode in English history in which James the First, disputing with the City Corporation, then the protector of popular liberties, threatened, as a punishment upon London, to remove the Court to Oxford. "Provided only your Majesty leave us the Thames," cleverly replied the Lord Mayor. But economic dominion is more subtle than king-craft: our landlords have stolen from us even the Thames. No Londoner who is not in some way a landlord obtains one farthing of economic benefit from the existence of London's ocean highway: the whole equivalent of its industrial advantage goes to swell our compulsory tribute of 37 millions sterling—London's annual rental.

And it is precisely the same with industrial capital. The worker in the factory gets, as a worker, absolutely no advantage from the machinery which causes the product of his labour to be multiplied a hundredfold. He gets no more of that product as wages for himself, in a state of free and unrestrained competition, than his colleague labouring at the very margin of cultivation with the very minimum of capital. The artisan producing shoes by the hundred in the modern machine works of Southwark or Northampton gets no higher wages than the surviving hand cobbler in the bye street. The whole advantage of industrial capital, like the whole advantage of superior land, necessarily goes to him who legally owns it. The mere worker can have none of them. "The remuneration of labour, as such," wrote Professor Cairnes in 1874,\* "skilled or unskilled, can never rise much above its present level."

Nor is it the increase of population which effects this result. During the present century, indeed, in spite of an unparalleled increase in numbers, the wealth annually produced in England *per head* has nearly doubled.† If population became stationary tomorrow, other things being equal, the present rent and interest would not be affected: our numbers determine indeed how far the margin of cultivation will spread (and this is of vital import); but, increase or no increase, the unrestrained private ownership of land and capital necessarily involves the complete exclusion of the mere worker, as such, from all the advantages of the fertile soil on which he is born, and of the buildings, railways, and machinery he finds around him.

So much the orthodox economists tell us clearly enough. Where then is the Socialist hope?

In the political power of the workers. The industrial evolution has left them landless strangers in their own country; but the political evolution is about to make them its rulers. If unrestrained private ownership of the means of production necessarily keeps the many workers permanently poor without any fault on their part, in order to make a few idlers rich without any merit on theirs (and this is the teaching of economic science), unrestrained private ownership will inevitably go. In this country many successive

\* "Some Leading Principles of Political Economy," p. 348.

† Mulhall's "Dictionary of Statistics," p. 245.



inroads have already been made in it; and these constitute the Progress of Socialism.

Three hundred years ago, for fear of the horde of "sturdy beggars," which even hanging had failed to extirpate, the wise Cecil was led to institute the general system of poor relief, a deduction from rent and interest for the benefit of those who were excluded from directly sharing in them. But the industrial evolution had not yet made this condition universal; and little further progress was made in Socialism until the beginning of our century. Then, indeed, the acme of individualism was reached. No sentimental regulations hindered the free employment of land and capital to the highest possible personal advantage, however many lives of men, women, and children were used up in the process. Capitalists still speak of that bright time with exultation. "It was not five per cent. or ten per cent.," says one, "but thousands per cent. that made the fortune of Lancashire." But opinion turned against *Laisser faire* fifty years ago. Mainly by the heroic efforts of a young nobleman, who lately passed away from us as Lord Shaftesbury, a really effective Factory Act was won; and the insatiate greed of the manufacturers was restrained by political power, in the teeth of their most determined opposition. Since then the progress has been rapid. Slice after slice has, in the public interest, been cut off the profits of land and capital, and therefore off their value, by Mines Regulation Acts, Truck Acts, Factory Acts, Adulteration Acts, Land Acts. Slice after slice has been cut off the already diminished incomes of the classes enjoying rent and interest, by the gradual shifting of taxation from the whole nation as consumers of taxed commodities to the holders of incomes above £150, the average family income of the Kingdom. Step by step political power and political organisation have been used for industrial ends, until a Minister of the Crown is the largest employer of labour in the country, and at least 200,000 men, not counting the army and navy, are directly in the service of the community, without the intervention of the profit of any middleman. All the public needs supplied by the labour of these public servants were at one time left to private enterprise, and were a source of legitimate individual investment of capital. Step by step the community has absorbed them, wholly or partially; and the area of private exploitation has been lessened. Parallel with this progressive nationalisation or municipalisation of industry, a steady elimination of the purely personal element in business management has gone on. The older economists doubted whether anything but banking could be carried on by joint-stock enterprise: now every conceivable industry, down to baking and milk-selling, is successfully managed by the salaried officers of large corporations of idle shareholders. More than one-third of the whole business of England, measured by the capital employed,\* is now done by joint-stock companies, whose shareholders could be expropriated by the community with little more dislocation of industry than is caused by the daily purchase of shares on the Stock Exchange.

Besides its direct supersession of private enterprise, the State

\* See Mr. Giffen's statement of capital, in "Capital and Land" (Fabian Tract, No. 7).



now registers, inspects, and controls nearly all the industrial functions which it has not yet absorbed. The inspection is often detailed and rigidly enforced. The State in most of the larger industrial operations prescribes the age of the worker, the hours of work, the amount of air, light, cubic space, heat, lavatory accommodation, holidays, and meal-times; where, when, and how wages shall be paid; how machinery, staircases, lift-holes, mines, and quarries are to be fenced and guarded; how and when the plant shall be cleaned, repaired, and worked. Even the kind of package in which some articles shall be sold is duly prescribed, so that the individual capitalist shall take no advantage of his position. On every side he is being registered, inspected, controlled; eventually he will be superseded by the community, and he is compelled in the meantime to cede for public purposes an ever-increasing share of his rent and interest.\*

This is the rapid progress of "Collectivism" which is so noticeable in our generation. England is already the most Socialist of all European communities, though the young Emperor of Germany is now compelled by the uneasy ground swell of German politics to emulate us very closely. English Collectivism will, however, inevitably be Democratic—a real "Social Democracy" instead of the mere Political Democracy with which Liberals coquet. As the oldest industrial country, we are likely to keep the lead, in spite of those old-fashioned politicians who innocently continue to regard Socialism as a dangerous and absolutely untried innovation. Are there not still, in obscure nooks, disbelievers and despisers of all science? The schoolmaster never penetrates into *all* the corners in the same generation.

But some will be inclined to say, "This is not what we thought Socialism meant? We imagined that Socialists wanted to bring about a sanguinary conflict in the streets, and then the next day to compel all delicately nurtured people to work in the factories at a fixed rate of wages."

It is not only in the nursery that bogey-making continues to be a very general though quite unnecessary source of anxiety. Socialists do but foretell the probable direction of English social evolution; and it needs nothing but a general recognition of that development, and a clear determination not to allow the selfish interests of any class to hinder or hamper it, for Socialism to secure universal assent. All other changes will easily flow from this acquiescent state of mind, and they need not be foreshadowed in words.

"But will not Socialism abolish private property?" It will certainly seriously change ideas concerning that which the community will lend its force to protect in the personal enjoyment of any individual.

It is already clear that no really democratic government, whether consciously Socialist or not, will lend its soldiers or its police to enforce the "rights" of such an owner as Lord Clanricarde. Even Matthew Arnold declared the position of the mere landlord to be an "anachronism." "Landlordism" in Ireland is admittedly doomed,

\* More detailed particulars of this largely unconscious adoption of Collectivism will be found in the "Fabian Essays in Socialism" (Scott), and in "Socialism in England" (Sonnenschein).



and opinion in England is rapidly ripening in favour of collective control over the soil. The gradual limitation of the sphere of private property which has been steadily taking place will doubtless continue; and just as courts of justice, private mints, slaves, public offices, pocket boroughs, votes, army commissions, post offices, telegraph lines, and now even continental telegraph cables landing on English shores, have ceased to be permissible personal possessions, so will the few remaining private gasworks, waterworks, docks, tramways, and schools be quickly absorbed, and an end be also made to private railways and town ground-rents. Ultimately, and as soon as may be possible, we look to see this absorption cover all land, and at least all the larger forms of industrial capital. In these, as Herbert Spencer pointed out forty years ago as regards land, private ownership will eventually no more be possible than it is now in a post office or a court of justice, both of which were once valuable sources of individual profit. Beyond the vista of this extension of collectivism, it is at present unnecessary to look; but we may at any rate be sure that social evolution will no more stop there than at any previous stage.

This is the Progress of Socialism. To an ever growing number of students of history and science, its speedy acceleration appears at once our evident destiny and our only hope. Political Economy, at least, whatever the economist may think of Socialism, now recognises no other alternative. So long as land and industrial capital remain in unrestrained private ownership, so long must "the subjection of labour to capital, and the enormous share which the possessors of the instruments of industry are able to take from the produce" inevitably continue, and even increase. The aggregate product may continue to grow; but "the remuneration of labour as such, skilled or unskilled, can never rise much above its present level."

The *only* effectual means of raising the material condition of the great mass of the people, is for them to resume, through their own public organisations, that control over their own industry which industrial evolution has taken from them, and to enter collectively into the enjoyment of the fertile lands and rich mines from which they are now so relentlessly excluded. This is the teaching of economic science; and, however little individual economists may relish the application, the workers are rapidly coming to appreciate it.

In this direction, too, is the mighty sweep and tendency of social evolution. Without our knowledge, even against our will, we in England have already been carried far by the irresistible wave. What Canute will dare to set a limit to its advance? One option we have, and one only. It is ours, if we will, to recognise a rising force, to give it reasonable expression, nay, within limits, even to direct its course. This is why we are Socialists, and why you must become so. For if the conscious intelligence of the natural leaders of the community lag behind the coming thought; if it ignore the vast social forces now rapidly organising for common action; if it leave poverty and repression and injustice to go on breeding their inevitable births of angry brutality and fierce revenge: then, indeed, social evolution may necessarily be once more accomplished by social cataclysm. From this catastrophe, our gradual adoption of Social Democracy is the path of escape.



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