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SOCIALISM AND AMERICAN IDEALS

by

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TO
THE MEMORY OF
SAMUEL SELDEN LAMB
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF A
MUTUAL PROMISE MADE AT
"DEAR OLD CHAPEL HILL"

PREFACE

The following essays originally appeared in the form of articles contributed at various times to the (daily) New York *Journal of Commerce and Commercial Bulletin*. Numerous requests have been received for a reprinting of them in more permanent form, and this little volume is the result.

I am deeply indebted to my friend Mr. John W. Dodsworth, of the *Journal of Commerce*, for his

kind and generous permission to reprint these articles. Since numerous changes and modifications from the original form have been made the responsibility for these statements and the sentiments expressed rests entirely upon me.

I hope it is not necessary for me to say that this is not intended as an exhaustive study of the more or less widespread movement to advance paternalism in Government. My object is to lay before the people, in order that they may carefully consider them, the reasons for thinking that Socialism is in theory and practice absolutely opposed and contrary to the principles of Americanism, of democracy, and even of the Christian-Jewish religion itself.

WM. STARR MYERS.

Princeton, N.J.
November 28, 1918.

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INTRODUCTION

MATERIALISM AND SOCIALISM

[ToC](#)

It was about a decade ago that Professor E.R.A. Seligman of Columbia University published his valuable work on the "Economic Interpretation of History," which gave a great impetus to the study, by historians, of the economic influences upon political and social development. Professor Seligman showed conclusively that one of the most potent forces in the growth of civilization has been man's reaction upon his material environment. Since that time the pendulum has swung so far in this direction that many students of history and economics would seem to think that all of life can be summed up in terms of materialism, that environment after all is the only important element in the advance of society, and that mankind is a rather negligible quantity. This is just as great a mistake as the former practice of ignoring economic influence, and even so great an authority as Professor Seligman would seem to tend in that direction.

On the other hand, Mr. George Louis Beer rightly claims that "the chief adherents of economic determinism are economists and Socialists, to whom the past is, for the most part, merely a mine for illustrative material. The latter, strangely enough, while explaining all past development by a theory that conceives man to be a mere self-regarding automaton, yet demand a reorganization of society that postulates a far less selfish average man than history has as yet evolved."^[1]

Most thoughtful people of to-day know that the political and economic elements were just as strong as the religious one in the Protestant Reformation in Germany, but that fact by no means would lessen the value of the gains for intellectual and religious freedom that were won by Martin Luther. Again, bad economic conditions had as much, or more, to do with the outbreak of the French Revolution as did political and philosophical unrest. Also taxation, trade and currency squabbles had more to do with causing an American Revolution than did the idealistic principles later enunciated in the Declaration of Independence. And there was a broad economic basis for the differences in crops, transportation and the organization of labor which expressed themselves in a sectionalism which finally assumed the political aspect that caused the Civil War. Yet the student who would forget the spiritual element in our life, who would overlook the fact that man is a human being and not a mere animal, will wander far astray into unreal bypaths of crass materialism.

On the other hand, it would be hard to find an economic explanation for the emigration of the Pilgrim Fathers to Plymouth, for the Quaker agitation that supported John Woolman in his war upon slavery or for most of the Christian missionary enterprises of the present day. Also it would take a mental microscope to find the economic cause for the extermination of the Moriscos in Spain by Philip III. or the expulsion by Louis XIV. of the Huguenots from France. These two great crimes of history had important economic consequences, but the cause behind them was religious prejudice. Prof. James Franklin Jameson, of the Carnegie Institution at Washington, rightly has stressed a study of the religious denominations in the United States, of the Baptist, Methodist and other "circuit riders" of the old Middle West, as one of the most fruitful sources for a fuller knowledge and understanding of the history and development of the American nation. Neither George Whitefield, Peter Cartwright, nor Phillips Brooks of a later day, can be explained in terms of economic interpretation.

This false and entirely materialistic conception of the development of society and civilization is a mistake not only of the learned, but of the pseudo-learned, of the men and women of more or less education whose mental development has not progressed beyond an appreciation of Bernard Shaw, Henrik Ibsen and H.G. Wells. Most of them are estimable people, but the difficulty is that they are so idealistic that, so to speak, they never have both feet upon the ground at the same time. This is especially true of our esteemed contemporaries, the Socialists. These cheerful servants of an idealistic mammon pride themselves upon completely ignoring human nature. A few years ago, at a London meeting of the "parlor Socialists" known as the Fabian Society which, by the way, was presided over by Bernard Shaw, an old man began to harangue the audience with the words, "Human nature being as it is—" At once his voice was drowned out by a chorus of jeers, cat-calls and laughter. He never made his address, for the audience was unwilling to hear anything about "human nature." No Socialists in general are willing to do so, for human nature, with the mental and spiritual sides of life, is just the element with which their fallacious creed cannot deal, and they know it. But the human element must enter into business and trade in the problems of direction, management, even in the form of competition itself, and cannot possibly be eradicated.

It is amusing to note that these same Socialists are busily occupied with pointing out what they consider to be the failures of government, as well as of "business and capitalism." Yet they do not realize that they are thus condemning their own system, for if the governments of the world have failed to do the work at present laid upon them, how can they ever undertake the gigantic additional political and capitalistic burden that Socialism would impose? Thomas Jefferson, the patron saint of the party that President Wilson now leads, always expressed a fear of "too much government." It would appear that the present Administration and the Democratic members of Congress have wandered far from their old beliefs, and if recent legislation is the result of it, their Socialistic experiments have not been much of a success.

FOOTNOTES:

[1]

The English-Speaking Peoples, p. 203.

SOCIALISM—IS IT AMERICAN?

I

ITS CONFLICT WITH THE IDEA OF EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

[ToC](#)

One of the main difficulties in discussing Socialism is to find a working definition; for this political or social movement is based upon a system of a priori reasoning which often is vague and lacking in deductions from practical experience. Socialism also is unreal in its assumptions and impractical in its conclusions, so that a person finds it almost impossible to give a definition that will include within its scope all the Socialistic vagaries and explain all the suppositions based upon nonexistent facts. Bearing this difficulty in mind, perhaps the following will serve as a working definition for the purposes of the present discussion. Socialism is the collective ownership (exerted through the government, or society politically organized) of the means of production and distribution of all forms of wealth. This means wealth not alone in mere terms of money but in the economic sense of everything that is of use for the support or enjoyment of mankind. Of course "production and distribution" means the manufacture and transportation of all forms of this economic wealth.

Inevitably this system would imply the substitution of the judgment of the government, or of governmental officials, for individual judgment, and for individual emulation and competition in all forms of human endeavor. Dr. David Jayne Hill recently has remarked that "if the tendency to monopolize and direct for its own purposes all human energies in channels of its own [i.e., the government's] devising were unrestrained, we should eventually have an official art, an official science and an official literature that would be like iron shackles to the human mind."^[2] The Socialist probably would object that this statement is extreme, but at least it is logical, and if Socialism be reasonable it must be logical, and it must be both reasonable and logical if it is to be popularly accepted.

The above might be stated in another way by saying that Socialism means the substitution of governmental judgment for that of the individual and for individual ambition as well. This is one of the strongest arguments against Socialism. Individual ambition is not only justifiable but also an absolute necessity for the integrity and growth of the human mind. Like everything else, ambition may be wrongly used or directed. It only goes to prove that the greater the value of anything the greater is the wrong when it is abused and not rightly used. In fact, proper ambition is the desire for greater opportunity for service according to the dictates of individual conscience and it lies at the basis of all religion and morality. Without ambition the individual mind goes to seed, so to speak,—there is no further growth or progress. This desire for greater service is the thing that produces patriotism, that causes men and women to work at the expense of personal

interest for Liberty Loans, the Red Cross, Y.M.C.A., etc.

Professor Richard T. Ely well expresses the same thought by saying—"When we all come to make real genuine sacrifices for our country, sacrifices of which we are conscious, then we shall first begin to have the right kind of loyal love for our country. We shall never get that kind of love merely by pouring untold benefits upon the citizens."^[3] Also, Edward Jenks, the brilliant British historian, says that—"A society which discourages individual competition, which only acts indirectly upon the bulk of its members, which refuses to recruit its ranks with new blood, contains within itself the seeds of decay."^[4]

The attempt by Socialism to substitute a governmental standard of happiness for individual desire and ambition is merely another attempt to legislate human mind and character. A government cannot make a man happy by law any more than it can make him moral or religious by the same means. All that law can do is to endeavor to place a man in such an environment that his moral or religious nature may be aroused and that his desire or ambition be encouraged. It was the inability to understand and realize this fact that caused the religious persecutions of past centuries when Catholics persecuted Protestants and Protestants persecuted Catholics, and both persecuted the Jews, and everybody thought that it was possible to legislate a man's belief and enforce it by the sanction of the law. Happiness, like religion, must have its impulse from within.

Furthermore, it is along this identical line of reasoning that Socialism is essentially un-American. The primary object of the government of the United States, the whole theory upon which our nation was formed, is not to give happiness to the individual. The Fathers of our country were too wise to attempt any such ridiculous undertaking. The ideal or object of the United States is to give equality of opportunity for each individual to work out his or her own salvation in a political, a moral or an economic sense. In other words, to give equality of opportunity for each individual to work out or achieve his or her own happiness. That is the only possible way in which happiness can be gained. For this reason the American people believe in public schools and child labor laws and other forms of social, not Socialistic, legislation, in order to help less fortunate individuals to help themselves, and not to help them in spite of themselves. The former plan is in accordance with the needs of human nature and with American ideas and ideals; the latter is the essential basis of Socialism and inevitably pauperizes and atrophies human character.

There is as much difference between social legislation and Socialism as there is between the common-sense advancement of the ideas of peace and the selfish or cowardly brand of treason that is known as pacifism. In both Socialism and pacifism the essential idea is that the individual should mentally "lie down" and "let George do it." In contrast with this, the common sense way to gain peace is actively to restrain wrong in order that right may triumph. The United States recently has been engaged in just this kind of an undertaking. Also, man is a social animal as well as an individual being, so social consciousness or social responsibility consists in the common responsibility of society to see that each individual gets a "square deal" in the form of equal opportunity for advancement by self effort.

In fact, the American ideal is to restrain human initiative only to the extent that is necessary to give equality of opportunity to all, and that the government should act only on the principle of the greatest good of the greatest number. Hence Americans believe that Rousseau was right when he said that the individual gives up a small part of his personal liberty, or license, in order to receive back full civil liberty, which is much greater because it has a wider outlook and possibilities and is guaranteed through the support of society. Furthermore, they believe that real liberty is freedom of individual action within the law as the expressed will of the people.

But everything depends upon the fact that the impulse to use this liberty must come from within, and not be commanded by a government from without. In the words of the Declaration of Independence, Americans believe "that all men are ... endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit [not the gift] of happiness." On this basis alone was this nation founded and has it prospered.

FOOTNOTES:

^[2]

The Rebuilding of Europe, p. 63.

^[3]

The World War and Leadership in a Democracy, p. 111.

^[4]

Law and Politics in the Middle Ages, p. 306.

II

WHY IT APPEALS TO OUR FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

[ToC](#)

It is often remarked that a reading of the names of the members of the present Socialist party, or

of those who advocate Socialism in the United States to-day, will disclose the fact that most of these names denote foreign or Continental European, as contrasted with American or British, origin. This can readily be understood when it is remembered that the governments of Continental Europe are theoretically on a different basis and of different origin from those of the United States and Great Britain or of those countries where the English Common Law prevails.

Whether in democratic France, Italy, Belgium or Norway, or in autocratic Germany or Austria-Hungary, the government is considered as in a sense coming down from above. It is believed, and taught, that government exists by divine right and that it has per se its own position and rightful place of domination. That it exists for itself, and not as a means to an end. But in Great Britain, the United States, and also in the British self-governing colonies, as compared with this, the whole order of things is upside down, so to speak. We believe that all governments arise from the people, that they should derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that they are merely an instrumentality to help the people to help themselves—to protect them in their inherent, inborn right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Also the government should act upon the principle of the greatest good of the greatest number as a test when there is any conflict between individual and social rights.

Of course it is now popularly understood that an autocracy like that of Germany until recently, was built up on the theory of the divine right of governments and of the princes who administered them. The constitutions of the German states and especially of the Empire of Germany, were the gift or gifts of the German princes to the people and not the expression of the will of the people, as in the United States, or of the people as represented in Parliament, as in Great Britain. Thus the King of Prussia, who was also Emperor of Germany, was God's representative on earth and responsible to God alone for the administration of his office. He, as well as the various princes in their respective states, were above all earthly law, were laws unto themselves, and they and their serving (or servile) officials were to be obeyed without question. Disobedience to the "princes'" laws was not only treasonable but sacrilegious as well. This fact goes far to explain the atrocities committed with the consent of German public opinion. William the Damned and his bureaucracy were believed to be above all moral or human law, and from the earthly standpoint were infallible and irresponsible. Their orders must be obeyed without question.

As already stated, few people realize that while even the European democracies do not accept the bald theory of the divine right of kings but believe in the divine right of the people, yet somehow or other these divine rights come down to the people by the gift of the government, and are not inherent or inalienable, as our Declaration of Independence would say. This is well illustrated by the principle of the freedom of the press, which is usually considered one of the greater guarantees of individual liberty. An examination of the provisions of various continental constitutions shows that this freedom is given or guaranteed by the government or by these documents themselves.

"The press shall be free," says the Constitution of Italy (Article 28). "No previous authorization shall be required in order that one may publish his thoughts or opinions through the press, except that every person shall be responsible according to law."—Cons. of The Netherlands (Art. 7). "There shall be liberty of the press."—Cons. of Norway (Art. 100). "Every third year the Riksdag (Parliament) ... shall ... appoint six persons of known intelligence and knowledge, who with the solicitor general as president shall watch over the liberty of the press ... If they decide that the [any] manuscript may be printed, both author and publisher shall be free from all responsibility, but the commissioners shall be responsible."—Cons. of Sweden (Art. 108). "The freedom of the press is guaranteed. Nevertheless, the cantons, by law, may enact measures necessary for the suppression of abuses.... The Confederation may also enact penalties for the suppression of press offenses as directed against it or its authorities."—Cons. of Switzerland (Art. 55). "The press is free; no censorship shall ever be established; no security shall be exacted of writers, publishers or printers. In case the writer is known and is a resident of Belgium, the publisher, printer, or distributor shall not be prosecuted."—Cons. of Belgium (Art. 18). But this same Constitution later on says quite pointedly (Art. 96, clause 2) when prescribing the administration of justice,— "In case of political offenses and offenses of the press closed doors shall be enforced only by a unanimous vote of the court." Also (in Art. 98) "The right of trial by jury shall be established in all criminal cases and for all political offenses of the press." A further reading of the provisions of these constitutions will show that the whole intention of the documents is to *grant* various rights and privileges to the people.

In contrast with these establishments of the freedom of the press by the constitutions and governments of the various European countries, the Constitution of the United States merely says in the First Amendment—"Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech or of the press." Stating this in other words, our Constitution merely protects an already existing, inalienable right. Its guarantee is in an entirely different sense from that of one of the above named European constitutions.

In case of riot or disorder, the divinely constituted government of a country of Continental Europe need merely "suspend the constitution," usually by the method of executive decree, and it suspends the freedom of the press and all constitutional guarantees with it, as was done in Hamburg, Germany, recently. In the United States this would be impossible. Even though Germany or some other nation should invade this country and destroy the governments at Washington and Albany, let us say for extreme illustration, yet if any person were unjustly thrown into prison in any part of New York state and a judge of any duly constituted court happened to

be nearby, he undoubtedly would issue a writ of habeas corpus and the person be brought into the court for substantiation of the charges in a legal manner according to the common law. It would not matter whether there were a government or not, the inalienable common law rights of an American citizen would continue to exist and the destruction of the government would only remove one of the means of protecting these rights and not destroy the rights themselves. In other words, the judge would merely act on the common law rights of the individual.

Furthermore, in the United States no person, whether high or low, official or private citizen, is immune from the operation of the common law. All are finally subjected to it, and the temporary immunity of the President, a Governor, or any other official, only exists during the term of office for which that official has been elected. At the expiration of the term the obligations and penalties of the law immediately are again in operation. On the other hand, in the countries of Continental Europe the officials are not subject to the common law but to the *Droit Administratif* or Administrative Law, which is an official law for the regulation or trial of officials. The average European would consider it almost an act of sacrilege to hale an official into court like any other private citizen.

All the above goes to show why many of our foreign-born population look upon a government as "something from above." They are wont to be more subservient to it, or to look upon it as responsible for the welfare of its citizens. Therefore Socialism, which stands essentially for the dependence of the individual upon the State as well as for the governmental direction of the individual and the substitution of State for individual judgment, for this reason appeals to them, and it has made its greatest gains upon the Continent of Europe or among the foreign-born or descended citizens of the United States.

The Socialists answer the charge that Socialism is not American by saying—"Neither is Christianity. It is a 'foreign importation.' Its founder was a 'foreigner,' and never set foot on American soil. Then there is the printing press. It isn't American, either, though somehow we manage to get along with it as well as the other 'foreign importations' mentioned." Of course this smart kind of argument gets nowhere. It is, in fact, intended to appeal to the half-baked type of mind which has only begun to think and has never progressed beyond the point of a consequent mental indigestion that would account for its Socialist nightmare. What the Socialists do know and are not honest enough to admit, is that this country was settled three centuries or more ago by a people who did not come hither to enjoy the fruits of other men's labor but who came here to carve out a new State in America literally by the sweat of their brows. Also they consciously founded it upon the basis of individual freedom and responsibility as proclaimed and enforced by the precepts of the Christian-Jewish religion and by the English Common Law. It is upon this foundation that they built their success. Upon this same basis their descendants and successors to-day weigh, measure and estimate that which is new in thought or invention whether "native" or "foreign-born." And they have weighed Socialism in this American balance and found it wanting.

But they brought with them neither certain loathsome diseases nor Socialism. All of these are likewise the results of immorality—*moral* and *political*—and of a type of decadent civilization still prevalent on the Continent of Europe and at that time threatening to gain a foothold even in England. It was this last-named threat from which the founders of the American nation were wise and energetic enough to escape, even though their escape meant going into the hardships of an unknown and almost uninhabited wilderness.

Socialism is not only essentially un-American, but it is essentially undemocratic. A democracy means a government by public opinion, and this opinion is the result of the co-operative impulse or community feeling of the people of a free country—a people who are given the opportunity to think for themselves, and are not thought for by a divinely constituted government. As Thomas Jefferson maintained, liberty is not a privilege granted by a government, but government is a responsibility delegated to its officers by the people. "On this distinction hangs all the philosophy of democracy."^[5] The people must decide questions for themselves and make their common will known through the representative organs of a government which is after all only the instrument intended to produce the best expression and administration of this public will.

FOOTNOTES:

[5]

David Saville Muzzey, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 311.

"Generally speaking, one may say of the German soldier that he is normally good-natured and is not disposed to do injury to harmless people, so long as he finds no obstacles put in his prescribed way. But once disturbed, he becomes frightful, because he lacks any higher capacity of discrimination; because he merely does his duty and recognizes no such thing as individual conscience and, besides, when he is excited becomes at once blind and super-nervous." "The Germans are, indeed, a good-natured people, born to blind obedience and humble willingness to let others do their thinking for them." Wilhelm Mühlton, *The Vandal of Europe*, pages 172 and 251.

In the course of a conversation during the past winter one of the members of the present city government of New York remarked that although he was not a Socialist, yet he failed to see how the election of Morris Hillquit on his un-American platform to be Mayor of New York would have had any result except as regards the national safety and the immediate influence upon our international relations. He added that the life of the city would have gone on just the same for a time at least; hence why the great fear of Socialism? What this man failed to see was that in fact the life of the city would go on for a time without change only on account of the impetus the former democratic government had given. That the policy of individual responsibility and judgment, which had always been the professed aim of American government in the past, had produced leadership and popular experience by the process of natural selection, and that this leadership would last only until the time that the deadening influence of Socialism had its true effect.

Let us consider for a moment the result of Socialism as a permanent policy. It means the substitution, as already shown, of government or official judgment and initiative for that of the individual. The whole process would be one to deaden and atrophy the powers of the people in general, with the result that there would follow a leveling down to a plane of mediocrity rather than a leveling up according to individual capacities and ambitions, exercised through equality of opportunity.

It should not be forgotten that the varying degrees of success in the different walks of life finally have caused so-called social differences. These differences result from the attempt on the part of mankind to meet "the inequality of men in their capacity for the work with which they are confronted in this life," said the New York *Journal of Commerce*, with great acuteness, in a recent editorial discussion of the phase of the question.^[6] It continued by saying,—

"What we must strive for is intelligent understanding and sound reasoning on the question of rights, and a just application of principles for the common benefit. Everything should be done to develop and train intelligence and increase the capacity of the people for their various tasks and duties, and they should be stimulated by the rewards to which they are fairly entitled in the results; but that cannot be made to mean that they are all equal in contributing to results and entitled to equality in the returns. Nothing could be more inconsistent with a sound democracy than the distribution of the material results of productive activity applied to the resources of nature, regardless of the merits or just claims of those engaged in the work. To apply that so-called principle of equality of rights without regard to the part taken in producing results, would deaden the energies applied in achieving them, and greatly reduce the product. It would prevent material prosperity and defeat national progress."

In a Socialistic State, inevitably there would be formed a bureaucracy of selfish office holders. Although, owing to the impetus of our previous free Democracy, the first Socialist officials might be men of ability who had gained their places through successful experience, yet a close corporation of officials would follow them and retain the exercise of power. The people gradually would sink to a level of servile conformity.

We have a perfect illustration of this in the Germany of the past forty years. There is a good reason for the fact that Germany, in the hands of a selfish and conscienceless autocracy, made more successful use of practical Socialism than any other nation in history and even carried efficiency itself to a point of great success. Her close corporation of bureaucratic officials, playing upon the remains of feudal and aristocratic loyalty among the people that have survived the darkness of past centuries as nowhere else among civilized nations, successfully carried through Socialism in many practical ways, just as Morris Hillquit and his un-American followers probably would have succeeded in doing in New York for a short time. But the inevitable followed. The German people have been reduced to a very low level of political ability.

The German is one of the poorest politicians in the world, as every student of political science knows. His lack of ability to run a government on constitutional principles has been found in the inane vaporings and factional maneuvering of the Reichstag, the supposedly "popular" House of the Parliament, which was merely a machine to register the will of the aristocratic autocracy. The individual citizen is the most servile and unthinking person in any civilized country of the world to-day. He has been trained to political incapacity.

What has the success of German Socialism amounted to? We find that Germany, from the political standpoint, is nothing but an organized machine without soul. Professor Ely, in taking the Moral side of the matter into consideration, well says that "it may be added that truth, an attribute of the gentleman, is less valued in Germany than in English speaking countries. As long ago as 1874 Professor James Morgan Hart in his book *German Universities* called attention to this weakness in the German character. A German mother will say to her child, 'O, you little liar,' and does not imply serious reprobation thereby, and Professor Hart said that if you called a German student a liar, he might take it calmly, but if you called him a blockhead, he would challenge you to fight a duel. All this has been amply exemplified during the present war. It was the German socialist Lassalle who said of the lie that it was one of the great European Powers! It was natural enough that he should have said it."^[7]

The public preparatory schools in Germany are so arranged that the pupils are trained to unthinking subservience to the labor policy and materialistic aims of a selfish, bureaucratic State. In fact, it is well to remember that this German illustration only proves that Socialism, instead of being democratic, is essentially undemocratic in its effects. It produces an autocracy of officials which is as unfair and selfish, because entirely materialistic, as any aristocracy of wealth or birth could be. Shrewd observers note the same tendency in the Commonwealth of Australia where the full fruition of its semi-Socialistic policy of recent years has been somewhat retarded by the individualistic influence of the English Common Law. When the Socialistic autocracy is once completely in power, with its professed policy of taking away human ambition and initiative, its position will be almost impregnable and become more and more secure as the average citizen becomes more and more servile, lazy and unambitious. Socialism is politically decadent and contains within itself the germ of self-destruction. During this process of self-destruction the people at large will offer a rich field for exploitation by the demagogue, the corrupt politician and the charlatan.

Furthermore, Socialism is essentially unChristian. It also is opposed absolutely to the whole basis of the Jewish religion as well. The foundation of the Jewish-Christian religion, for they are essentially the same in basis, is the belief in the value of the individual soul in the sight of God, and the dependence upon its relation to something Divine. The impulse from within the human heart is the basis of all right living. Thus Christ taught the social responsibility of the individual for his neighbor. The appeal always was made to the individual and the responsibility was laid upon him.

We read in the New Testament—"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts, XX, 35.)

Right giving, which results from an appreciation of the obligations of service, is an individualistic action; receiving, which means a benefit from the activity and initiative of someone else (and often irrespective of the real deserts of the recipient), is essentially Socialistic in tendency. The one causes a growth in individual character; the other tends to stunt or weaken it. St. Paul mentioned (1st Corinthians XIII, 3) as one of the greatest possible forms of service the bestowal of all one's goods to feed the poor. But he did not suggest as a better way that the individual should sit back, let the State take over his goods and attend to the feeding of the poor, and thus relieve him from responsibility. In fact, "love" itself, which is declared to be the greatest thing of all, is essentially an individual impulse and never could be called forth from the human heart, nor supplied to it either, by the fiat of a government.

The same note runs through the Jewish Scriptures. At the beginning (Genesis, chap. IV), in the old story of Cain's murder of Abel, when Cain inquired of the Lord "Am I my brother's keeper?" the inference to be drawn most decidedly is that the Lord thought he was, and not the State, or the tribal government of that day, in his stead. Both the Christian and Jewish religions are essentially individualistic in appeal and social in responsibility, and so also is Democracy.

May not the extreme brutality of the German soldier of to-day be the result not only of the ruthless command from the official higher up but also of the de-souling, materialistic influence of Socialism on the common people of Germany during the past twenty-five years? Is not the viciousness of Prussian militarism plus the demoralizing influence of Socialism a sufficient explanation?

According to Mr. J. Dover Wilson, "the German nation, in fact, is suffering from some form of arrested development, and arrested development, as the criminologists tell us, is almost invariably accompanied by morbid psychology. That Germany at the present moment, and for some time past, has been the victim of a morbid state of mind, few impartial observers will deny. It has, however, not been so generally recognized that this disease—for it is nothing less—is due not to any national depravity but to constitutional and structural defects."^[8]

Many Socialists point to the housing, sanitary, insurance and other State activities of Germany as showing the care of the Government for the laboring man. My dogs are well fed, are kept clean, dry, healthy and amused, and are carefully looked after in every way. But they are still dogs. They have no soul or any right or power of self-determination. So recent events show beyond cavil that the German workingman, from the standpoint of the State and Government, was in reality a political dog. He existed only for the good of the divinely constituted State and its God-given princely proprietors, and as such was used and sacrificed for the imperial and national glory. The German laboring man was the most exploited, the most servile, the most unfairly treated worker on earth. He was given enough material comforts or even amusements (religious, theatrical, musical or otherwise) to keep him seemingly content, but politically he was not permitted to think—or economically either, when taken in the broad sense of the term. Therefore those who expect from the revolution or uprising against the Kaiser and his military henchmen the immediate establishment of a well-ordered and democratic republic, are reckoning without their host. People must be experienced in self-government before they can make a success of democracy as that term is understood in America, and experienced the German people are not.

While the Socialists of the United States, "parlor" and otherwise, include in their number many sincere and thoughtful, as well as idealistic people, it is well to remember that a large part of them is composed of individuals who have nothing, and want to divide it all with everybody else. It is the old jealousy of the "have nots" for those who have, which usually means the "will nots" for those who have the ambition and will. Or if they are not of this kind, the best that can be said

of them is that they are foreigners, who are in reality not Americans, who don't believe in democracy, but in autocracy, and probably don't even know what democracy means. Autocracy is the government of the many by and for the benefit of the selfish few. Real democracy is the government by and for the many, who express their will through their duly chosen representatives.

FOOTNOTES:

[6]

Issue for November 12, 1918.

[7]

Op. cit. p. 172.

[8]

The War and Democracy, p. 58.

IV

SOME INSTANCES OF ITS PRACTICAL FAILURE

[ToC](#)

I have stated my conviction, and the reasons for it, that Socialism is essentially undemocratic and unChristian, as well as unAmerican. Yet after all it is in the practical realm of experience that it has proved to be most lacking and inefficient. To prove this, it is hardly necessary to point to the classic illustrations of the utter failure of Socialism when actually tried in France under the leadership of Louis Blanc and Albert during the days of the Second Republic in the year 1848, or again when tried under the form of the Commune in 1871. The horrors of the extreme form of Socialism known as Bolshevism, as seen in the Russia of 1918, are destined to implant a useful lesson, not soon to be forgotten, in the minds of intelligent people throughout the entire world.

One of the best illustrations of the failure of a practical Socialistic State is that of the "Mayflower" settlement at Plymouth in 1620. In order to raise the money needed for the venture the Pilgrims borrowed seven thousand pounds from seventy London merchants. In order also to provide a species of sinking fund it was decided to accept the suggestion of the creditor merchants that the net earnings of the colonists should go into a common fund for the space of seven years and then should be divided among the shareholders. It should especially be remembered that the Pilgrims were a set of people small in number and as a consequence easy to govern; of a high type of industry and integrity; and that they were united by the strongest of all common and social interests,—that of deep religious conviction. Furthermore, the relative positions in life of the personnel of the entire Plymouth Colony showed a remarkable equality. Their method of living was primitive and most simple in form, without the usual complications of the life of even three hundred years ago, much less of that of today. And yet this communal or Socialistic system in Plymouth resulted in such a marked lack of interest among the inhabitants, the whole arrangement worked so badly, that the settlement verged on failure and destruction. The system virtually was abolished after only three years trial in the year 1623 and good results showed themselves immediately. "Individual effort returned with the prospect of individual gain." The cause of the failure is evident,—the system was opposed to the fundamental facts of human nature.

But what is "human nature"? Let us take a definition from the Socialists themselves. "If the phrase means anything at all, it means man, with his loves and hates, his desire for pleasure and aversion to pain, his noble and ignoble traits, his interests, feelings, beliefs, prejudices, ignorance, knowledge, fears and hopes. All these motives, desires and emotions vary in each individual, some of them usually dominating over the rest, yet all more or less active. Some one or more of them may be cultivated by favorable environment or almost crushed by an unfavorable environment. A saint may be dragged down to hell by adverse conditions and a rake win eminence in the same environment. If the cultured educator ... was suddenly forced to earn his living in a vile mining center, his polish would soon wear off, and he would brood over a world that now strikes him as on the whole all right. If cast adrift at sea, within a week the wolf stare of hunger would make him and his associates seriously consider casting lots as to who should be eaten. Later the feast might actually begin and ... human nature find it easy enough to gnaw the shin bone of a fellow castaway. This thing we call human nature is a bundle of emotions and desires that will find expression in different ways, according to the environment in which it is located, as we have seen in the example given."^[9]

This is exactly true in thesis, though utterly false in detail. But it is the object of democracy to give equality of opportunity for human nature, starting from the essential point of individual impulse (which is the precise expression of character), to work out the best of which it is capable. On the other hand, it is the object of Socialism, acting through political and economic machinery, to crowd out these varying attributes of human nature and reduce the individual to the mental status of a dull, unthinking animal. Of course human nature always has rebelled against this repression and always will do so in the final analysis. It is impossible for Socialism or any other

system of uniform and outward repression to fetter the human soul and it inevitably will fail to do so in the end. It is from an experience of the difficulties and dangers, the unhappiness and injustice that will accompany this process of failure, that the opponents of Socialism and the believers in Democracy wish to spare the people of the world to-day.

This failure of Socialism especially is true as applied to Germany. The un-souling of the people has come as the direct result of the use of Socialism by the military autocracy for its own selfish purposes. Also its failure is repeatedly seen in its actual working, and in spite of the German boast of efficiency. The best illustration of this, because the one most used by the Socialists on the other side of the argument, is that of the railroads.

Most of the railroad lines of importance in Continental Europe are owned and operated by the various governments. I can say from my own personal experience and observation that the only railroads that are really well run, so far as I have traveled, are those under private ownership and direction, as in Great Britain and the United States. I have tried the various trains de luxe and Blitzzüge of Continental Europe and their slow progress and often indifferent accommodations make one long for an English or American express train. And then to hold first-class tickets in Germany, and be refused admission to first-class compartments still empty "because some officials may want them," as was my experience in going from Nürnberg to Mainz, does not add to one's desire for governmental control. The best European trains do not for one moment compare with those of the privately owned British and American railroads.

According to statistics published in 1913, the railroads of the United States were capitalized at \$60,000 per mile under private ownership; the government-owned German roads at \$109,000 per mile, and this in spite of the far cheaper costs of building. Railroad rates in the United States, both freight and passenger, under private ownership have been among the lowest in the world. The first thing that our government control has brought about is a raise in rates that exceeds by far what the private managements would have dared even to imagine, much less ask of the Interstate Commerce Commission. And this has been accompanied by a marked deterioration of service, all of which can by no means be blamed upon conditions resulting from the war. Poorer service at higher cost is the almost universal experience, in the long run, of government-owned public utilities both here and abroad.

The Boston *Commercial* in 1913 called attention to the fact that in France the year 1912 was marked by the largest increase in gross receipts on record, for both government and privately owned railroads, but the privately owned roads showed an improvement in net earnings almost three times as great as that of the nationalized railroads. These failings noted above are almost inevitably found wherever the government owns the railroads or other utilities, or else these utilities are run at a loss and the difference made up in the tax bills of the people. Government control never is as efficient and economical as private control, even though all questions of political power and influence be omitted from consideration.^[10]

The important testimony of Mr. W.M. Acworth, an English authority upon railroads, which he gave by invitation before the Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce at Washington, has not been fully appreciated by American public opinion. The National City Bank of New York rightly stressed the importance of this testimony in one of its bulletins during the year 1918. Mr. Acworth was in this country during the early part of 1917 as a member of the special Canadian Commission on Railways, and he told the Senate Committee that "while American companies have revolutionized equipment and methods of operation, Prussia has clung to old equipment and old methods. This is typical. In all the history of railway development it has been the private companies that have led the way, the State systems that have brought up the rear. Railroading is a progressive science. New ideas lead to new inventions, to new plant and methods. This means the spending of much new capital. The State official mistrusts ideas, pours cold water on new inventions and grudges new expenditure. In practical operation German railway officials have taught the railway world nothing. It would be difficult to point to a single important invention or improvement, the introduction of which the world owes to a State railway."

Is it not a rather significant fact that with all their boasted advance in science and learning, the Germans have failed utterly in the two realms of politics, as shown in the preceding pages, and of railroading? And these are the two most extensive fields of the influence of German Socialism.

The American citizen has before him in clear outline the sure result from a continuation of governmental ownership or control as a permanent policy in the United States after the war. As regards railroad personnel, if the positions from top to bottom were filled with Mr. Bryan's "deserving Democrats," as was the case with our diplomatic and consular service in 1913, the results would be as striking, though perhaps in a different and even more serious way.

Of course the Civil Service, which has been a solid measure of reform and one from which we dare depart only at our peril, would probably be called into use and be evaded in exactly the same way as it has been in the past. And even if it were not evaded, we must remember that the Civil Service examinations and rules are not a guarantee of efficiency or excellence. The best that can be said for them is that they are a protection against absolute incompetence and, to a certain extent, against political spoiling. But in a positive sense, the Civil Service is merely a guarantee of mediocrity. And mediocrity never yet made a success of a great transportation or productive system such as our railroads or industrial corporations. The political possibilities of a "railroad vote" of several million employees of the government need only be referred to, to be feared.

Perhaps no one would suffer more from a policy of government ownership than the present force

of railroad employees in the United States. They have won their present positions for the most part by individual achievement, but their future advancement would depend not upon the continued successful handling of their work, but upon either the injustice of political favoritism or the indiscriminating rules of the Civil Service. That some of the employees have not failed to grasp the political possibilities is shown by my own recent experience upon a train between Philadelphia and New York. I had a difference with one of the train crew who was collecting the tickets in my car, and which was caused by carelessness and indifference on his part. The employee finally answered my protests by remarking—"Oh well, we don't care so long as Woodrow Wilson is in the White House." The truth or untruth of this statement is not the important thing, but the fact that he made it.

The personnel would tend steadily to deteriorate in efficiency. The successful government employee is the one who follows most closely the beaten track of precedent and past experience. If he departs from this track, he inevitably arouses the opposition of his fellow-employees or of the unthinking part of the public, who usually desire no change. He also takes all the risks of experiment and if he succeeds, the rewards are uncertain and small; if he fails, he personally bears all the consequences. This is the reason for the tendency toward steady deterioration on the part of all public service. Employees of the State must follow the path of absolute conformity to the past. This deadens individual initiative, ambition and inventiveness.

At this point it would be well to repeat the penetrating question recently asked by Mr. Otto H. Kahn in the course of an address before the American Bankers Association in Chicago. Said Mr. Kahn—"Now, you and I, who are trained in business, have all we can do to conduct our respective concerns and personal affairs with a fair measure of success. On what grounds, then, can it be assumed that by becoming endowed with the dignity of a governmental appointment, men of average or even much more than average ability will develop the capacity to run successfully the huge and complex business undertakings which the devotees of paternalism would place in their charge?"

Furthermore, the plant and its upkeep would be subject to political influence and objects. Just as we have needlessly expensive or even useless post office buildings, harbor improvements and other works of national cost built as the result of sectional log-rolling of Congressional politicians, so probably we would have railroad stations, tracks, subway crossings, and service in general offered not from the standpoint of efficiency and public service, but as indirect campaign contributions to needy Congressional candidates for re-election.

It should be realized that the mistakes and delays in our shipping and airplane production during the first year of the war were probably not so much the fault of the government at Washington and the administration of affairs in these departments, as they were the inherent defects of the Government itself doing the work, and these effects were overcome only by the heroic efforts of Mr. Schwab, Mr. Ryan, and the other men whom President Wilson wisely chose to insure the success of these war measures as a patriotic necessity.

Our present postal service, the most necessary, next to the public schools, of all the means for the formation of community feeling and public opinion essential to a democracy, has been under the charge of deterioration and inadequate service for the past ten years. Also it must be remembered that the government-controlled systems of telegraph and telephone in the various European countries are unspeakably bad, according to the standards of service to which we have become accustomed through long years of efficient private management. Therefore, in the light of this experience the taking over of our systems by the government has its justification only as a war necessity. As a matter of permanent policy, it would be an entirely different and very serious matter. The marked deterioration that almost immediately appeared in the telegraph service, is sufficient proof of this fact.

FOOTNOTES:

[9]

Quoted from an editorial in the (daily) New York *Evening Call*, issue for August 29, 1918.

[10]

"The advantages which might be derived from a single united administration of all the railroads are doubtless somewhat analogous to those we derive from the post office, but in most other respects the analogy fails completely and fatally. Railway traffic cannot be managed by pure routine like that of the mails. It is fluctuating and uncertain, depending upon the seasons of the year, the demands of the locality, or events of an accidental character. Incessant watchfulness, alacrity, and freedom from official routine are required on the part of a traffic manager, who shall always be ready to meet the public wants." W.S. Jevons (reprinted in *Selected Readings in Public Finance*, by C.J. Bullock, p. 103).

There is one term, the use of which is anathema to the Socialist, and that term is "human nature." He never wishes to meet or discuss this in an argument, and with good reason, for it has been shown that it is only by ignoring human nature entirely, both in theory and in practice, that Socialism can make even the semblance of a reasonable showing. But another term, which the Socialist especially likes, is "co-operation," and that is one to which he has no manner of right. Cooperation is a social movement, the impulse for which comes from within the human heart, while Socialism as already stated, is essentially a working together only as the result of outward direction and dictation. The first is the act of a free man; the latter results from the obedience of a political and mental slave.

We Americans have made one of the greatest successes of history along the line of political co-operation. Our whole democratic type of government is based upon this principle as a foundation. But we have done little toward the free and successful use of co-operation in business or production. It is here that our British cousins have far exceeded us even though we have outdistanced them, we think, along political lines of activity.

It was shown in *The Journal of Commerce and Commercial Bulletin* for January 25, 1918, that this co-operative movement in Great Britain has developed to such an extent that at the present time distributive societies there number some 3,500,000 members. The turnover of these societies last year amounted to \$605,000,000, to which should be added \$350,000,000 from the co-operative wholesale and the hundred distributive societies. As a contrast to this, the American people have been so filled with the individualism necessary to the spirit of the pioneers who in reality have been "subduing a continent" that they have failed to realize what a wonderful field for efficient, popular effort the commercial and industrial activities of the country offered if we only would adopt the principle of co-operative organization. Probably one of the greatest lines of development after the war will be this co-operation between producers and consumers. In no other way can those activities and profits of the middlemen, which are more or less unnecessary, be entirely eliminated.

I have it on good authority from members of the American Federation of Labor that fully 95 per cent of its membership is opposed to Socialism, and that the Socialistic 5 per cent is largely among the laboring men of the Pacific Coast, with possibly a few in the Middle West, especially Kansas. This latter is probably an after effect of the old "Populistic" craze of the early 'nineties. On the other hand, American labor is feeling the need of cooperative action, not only as regards themselves, but also as regards capital as well, and Mr. Gompers has proved himself of the stature of real statesmanship in appreciating and advancing this idea in the most patriotic way since the war began. Individual laboring men with whom I have talked say they "like the working together" that Socialism advocates, but after explaining their position more fully, in nine cases out of ten it is found that they utterly repudiate the dictatorial, outwardly-directing theory upon which Socialism stands, and in reality desire the advance of this spirit of co-operation. Thus they look upon a bonus from profits as merely a partial gift on the part of corporate management. What they desire is profit-sharing, as standing for a recognition of the just right of labor to a larger part of the just proceeds of its work. Thus probably the greatest antidote and enemy of Socialism is profit-sharing, and after all it is only a recognition of the fact that production is the joint work of both capital and labor, that both are requisite and necessary, and that their whole success is based upon this spirit of co-operation.

There is no doubt that there are men to-day who are in official positions of power and influence in our national, state and city administrations throughout the United States and who are more or less openly using the present crisis of unusual and war conditions in order to precipitate the country into a complete Socialistic organization. It may be that we shall come to Socialism as a final political and economic development. Personally, I for one do not believe that we will, or that even a small part of the real thinking American people, either native or foreign born, would desire this. Even if we did enter upon such a policy it would only be temporary in duration, and be followed by a terrible struggle of readjustment to the old conditions. But if we do undertake Socialism, let us at least do it with our eyes open. Let us realize that we are entering upon an entirely new and untried policy which is diametrically opposed to all the ideas and ideals, the history, the fundamental thought and theory upon which this country was founded and has prospered and developed so marvellously up to the present time. Those officials, no matter where placed as regards power and responsibility, who by underhand means would throw us into this entirely new method of life without due thought and consideration, are politically dishonest, no matter how sincere they may be, and are as traitorous to American life and thought as are the pro-German or the pacifist.

The reaction against measures of government ownership and control which have been made necessary by the exigencies of a great war crisis already has appeared in Great Britain. The English papers contain open criticism of the government operation of the railways, of shipbuilding and of production in general. The London *Times* said editorially last year: "The railways are certainly short of labor, but is it established that all the officials are putting their very best efforts into the solution of the present problems? The railways are now Government controlled institutions and competition has diminished where it has not vanished. It seems to be a question whether quite the same amount of thought and work is being put into the efficient management of the companies as in the days before the war when the lines were keenly competing against each other. This question which has been raised of a slackening of effort directly in consequence of the nationalization of the railways is a serious one and evidently deserves inquiry.... The public is entitled to know if the railways are now using what remains to

them (of labor and capital) with the utmost efficiency." Also the best authorities, and even the government investigators themselves, are urging a speedy return to private ownership and operation at the earliest possible moment after the war. The same undercurrent of feeling, or rather conviction, is rapidly spreading among our own people in the United States.

Mr. Hoover has expressed this same view in the most emphatic terms in the course of an address to the special conference of Federal Food Administrators held in Washington, D.C. on November 12, 1918. "It is my belief," said Mr. Hoover, "that the tendency of all such legislation except in war is to an over degree to strike at the roots of individual initiative. We have secured its execution during the war as to the willing co-operation of 95 per cent of the trades of the country, but under peace conditions it would degenerate into an harassing blue law."

But the advocates of Socialism are especially active during the time of uncertainty and confusion that necessarily follows the close of a great world war. At such times, they always are. In the words of Mr. Kahn,—"They possess the fervor of the prophet allied often to the plausibility and cunning of the demagogue. They have the enviable and persuasive cocksureness which goes with lack of responsibility and of practical experience. They pour the vials of scorn and contempt upon those benighted ones who still tie their boat to the old moorings of the teachings of history and of common sense appraisal of human nature. And being vociferous and plausible they are unquestionably making converts."

Recently I saw little "stickers" pasted on the walls of a railway station in a small New Jersey city which read as follows—

The Masters Fear Slaves That
Think
If you think right you will act right
Study Socialism

This is typical of the fallacious arguments so often encountered. First of all, it has the tone of darkest Hungary or Bolshevist Russia, and is absolutely contrary to the facts as regards conditions in the United States. The so-called "toasters" or "capitalistic class," for suppose it is to them that this refers, have been in the forefront of the movement to educate the masses, and have given their time, money and sympathy to aid in its success. I heartily agree with the *non sequitur* statement that "if you think right you will act right." I am perfectly willing to join in the demand that our people should "study Socialism," for if the American people will not only study it but also think their way through in regard to it, no sincere believer in democracy and in American ideals need have any doubt as to the final outcome.

We Americans believe that our people, in the long run, will decide right upon any question to which they have given due thought and consideration. So in their hands we may safely leave the whole question of Socialism and government ownership or operation. All we ask is, that they be given due knowledge and instruction. Furthermore, if Socialism be true, it should not fear open and complete examination. If the truth is the truth, it must prevail in the end. Therefore the surreptitious and secret attempt to foist Socialism upon an unsuspecting people savors much of the lack of sincerity and of belief in its real truth on the part of its own advocates. At least they should stop making their appeal mainly to the uninstructed foreign-born and to the apostles of half-baked learning, and lay their case before the hard-headed laborer, the business and the professional man.

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