

The State and Feudalism

From the Short History of Politics.
By Prof. Jenks.

[The last issue contained Prof. Jenks account of the character of the early state. It was territorial, and the human elements were bound together by military allegiance, differing thus from the previous patriarchal and tribal societies in which the bond was kinship. A new type of religion was evolved, the exclusive tribal systems of ancestor worship giving place to such monotheistic religions as Christianity and Mahomedanism. The new political organism, the State, no longer regarded custom as its guiding star. By its very nature militarism is competitive and the old nobility of birth give way before the royal nobility appointed by the sovereign. This paved the way for further change. It marked the triumph of the State over the older patriarchal society.]

Feudalism. And, finally, the State was individual, not communal. Again we must be careful not to misunderstand terms. The dream of the despot, who would like to govern every man in his dominions by the immediate action of his caprice, is, happily, never realized. But the tendency of the State, from its very inception, was to break down all intermediate barriers between itself and its individual subjects. Every wise ruler is, however, aware that this can only be done by degrees. The warriors who founded successful States, whether they were alien adventurers, or enterprising war-leaders of neighboring tribes, found various degrees of authority in existence among their subjects, exercised by men who had been accustomed to deference, if not actually to obedience. These men were rarely dispossessed by the conqueror, unless they persisted in refusing all overtures. The conqueror merely insisted that they should acknowledge their authority to be derived from him. This seemed to be such a purely theoretical matter, that the transaction was usually attended with little difficulty. Even where the demand of fealty or faithfulness was accompanied by a demand for tribute there was little practical difficulty; the conquered chief reckoned with shrewd accuracy on getting the money out of his followers, the humbler members of his tribe or clan. If the conqueror chose to regard the land occupied by his tribe or clan as a gift or trust for the conqueror himself, it did not seem to matter much; the important point was that the tribe or the clan still kept its land. Where the native chief was irreconcilable, or had been killed in the struggle, the conqueror put one of his own "companions," his "comes" or "thane," into his place; and thus, of course, obtained a really stronger hold on the conquered territory. Quite naturally, the conqueror's immediate vassals (as we may now begin to call them) found it convenient to repeat the same process with their inferiors. We have seen, in fact, that there were the germs of such a relationship in the practice of cattle lending practised by patriarchal society. But then the adoption of agriculture made land the important factor in society; and so loans of land became the sign of subordination.

Sometimes the transaction was genuine; as where one man loaned to another land which he was really entitled to keep for himself. Very often, however, it was merely fictitious; as when the inferior yielded up his own land to his superior, and received it back again from him as a loan. This practice, known technically as "commendation," was very common in Continental Europe in the Dark Ages, and was primarily due to the fact that, in times of disturbance, the best chance for the weak man is to acknowledge himself the vassal of a strong man, who will protect him. But the tendency spread beyond cattle and land. The customs of a gild, or a number of gilds, their cherished rights of controlling their own members, and excluding strangers from the town, came to be held as privileges granted by a ruler; and so town life was brought within the same idea. Finally, even such a thing as spiritual office (with the emoluments attaching thereto) was held as a gift or loan from a superior and so indeed the technical name for such a gift or loan, a **benefice**, came to be specially associated with spiritual office. Thus the whole social organism gradually assumed what we call a **feudal** aspect, in some respects, resembling the old patriarchal organization of groups within groups, but differing from it in the important principle, that the rights of the individual were no longer acquired by birthright, by membership of a social group, but were at least deemed to be the grant of a superior, in return for promised service. In the higher ranks, of course, that service was military; and in this the new system showed its connection with the newer type of society. But, in the lower ranks, money and labor service were more common. The peasant rendered labor or paid rent to his lord, in return for his land; the craftsmen of a town paid an annual sum to the king or earl for the charter of their privileges. Even the beneficed clerk owed to his patron the duty of saying prayers for the good of his soul.

Evidence. We shall see more, as we go on, of the nature and consequences of feudalism. Here it is sufficient to notice its place in the History of Politics. It is the connecting link between purely patriarchal and purely political society. The brilliant historical labors of M. Longnon have, to all intents and purposes, established the geographical identity of the great fiefs of the West Frankish Empire, with the tribal settlements of early Gaul. Mr. Skene has been equally successful in showing that the Scottish earldoms and thanages of the eleventh century were really the old tribal and clan chiefships in a feudal dress. Could we but get sufficient evidence, we should, no doubt, find that the same was the case in England and other countries. Feudal society has often been reproached with vagueness and inconsistency. These are precisely the qualities which we should expect in a phase of development which is not in itself essential or universal, but which is an easy and convenient means of softening a change. In the popular form of entertainment known as "dissolving views," one picture is

The Coat's Millions

(From "Labor Leader," London.)

GLASGOW has once again proved its power of, shall it be called "Dramatic Propaganda?" The working of the capitalist system and the proposals of the Socialists were set in sharp contrast at St. Andrew's Hall, on the morning of November 20.

The occasion was a special meeting of the shareholders of the Coats' Thread combine called to sanction a scheme, whereby the capital is to be increased from £10,000,000 to £20,250,000. Of the increase, £7,300,000 is a free gift to the shareholders from the reserve fund; consequently, only £2,950,000 of the augmented stock is in any sense new capital.

This free gift of £7,300,000 was made possible by war profiteering at the expense of Labor, and that the poorest and weakest sections of society, as is clearly shown by the fact that the price of the spool or reel of thread used by sempstresses and working women everywhere, had been raised from 2½d. in 1914 to 7½d. in 1919!

The evil, exploiting influence is also felt in the countries whence the raw flax is obtained, as Soviet Russia will testify.

A TABLE OF WAR PROFITS

A year ago a London writer stated the profits taken by the Combine would cause a Revolution if they were not restrained. This year the concern has finished with greater profits than ever. In 1918 the net profit was £3,171,796, which gave a 30 per cent. dividend to the ordinary shareholders; in 1919, the net profit is £3,995,149, and a 40 per cent. dividend is given to the ordinary shareholders! The capital of the company in 1914 was £10,000,000, and since then the profits have run up as follows:

Year	Profit (£)
1914	2,634,388
1915	2,592,966
1916	3,387,395
1917	3,360,950
1918	3,171,796
1919	3,995,149
	£19,140,644

The profits given above are net; that is, they are exclusive of all sums paid to reserves, insurance, excess profits, tax and so on.

But the exactions of the firm do not end here. As we have recorded, the reserves had swollen to bursting point with War Profits and a curious financial operation was performed, which enabled the shareholders to obtain a free gift of £7,300,000 in new shares, plus the option of acquiring further shares to the value of £2,950,000 at par!

By this change the capital is increased from £10,000,000 to £20,250,000, on which Labor will be asked to pile up the dividends.

In future, the dividend will be, for a time at least, 15 per cent. instead of 30 per cent. and the combine will

not suddenly replaced by another; but the old picture gradually melts into the new by a nebulous and misty process, rather fascinating to watch, but not conveying any very clear ideas. In the panorama of History, feudalism represents the blurred outlines and motley colors of the "dissolving view."

not then be so obviously guilty of profiteering. The public have short memories; but Socialists must keep them renewed.

Capital for Housing and Coats' War Profits.

There are 30,000 people who own the £10,000,000 invested in the concern before the war. During the war they have received over £19,000,000 in profits, to which is now added a gift of £7,300,000 in shares, making the total plunder £26,440,644.

Lord Glentanar, a director of the firm and a member of the Coats' family, died recently and left £4½ millions. This property, added to what the shareholders have received, makes a capital value of £30,690,644, which would suffice to provide Glasgow with 50,000 cottage homes.

The city is short of 57,000 houses and can not get the capital for their construction from the Treasury. No wonder the women of the city who want houses turned out to demonstrate! Their action has waked tens of thousands of unthinking people to realize the need for a levy on the profits of monopolists as a preliminary to Housing Reform, and to an understanding of what is meant by Nationalization.

Glasgow Municipal Tramways have also worked to show how Public Capital for the Public Needs can be found.

The women of Glasgow have given a strong lead to the women of the whole country as to how to organize an educative campaign for social ownership and control, not only of Monopolies like that of Coats' Combine, but of Coal and Cotton and Land, and all that is needed for the community's life.

THE PROLETARIAT

(Continued From Page Two.)

pushed him. The individual proletarian can accomplish his own redemption only with the redemption of his whole class.

*Note.—In America the conditions under which a proletarian is able to rise into the bourgeois class have been prolonged by the abundance of our natural resources and the existence of an open frontier. But if the author's statements in regard to this matter are not strictly applicable to our society, they tend more and more to become so.—Translator.

COMPROMISE

Nothing can cure the hypocrisy of the British press. A newspaper notes that M. Clemenceau when visiting Strassburg went to the cathedral. It adds that his opinions on religion are well known. That leaves the British public to assume anything. It would never have done to say outright that M. Clemenceau was an Atheist. The land that gave birth to Christian Socialism for Socialists who lacked courage, and Agnosticism for Atheists who feared the respectabilities and a thousand and one other compromises, remains true to itself.

A Moscow wireless states that a special Soviet train named "The Red East" has left for Turkestan to organize Soviet institutions there.—Vancouver "Province," Dec. 19.

Subscriptions to "The Indicator," \$1.00 for 20 issues.