

The Science of Socialism

By H. M. Bartholomew.

Article No. 9.—Social Control.

THOSE of my readers who have done me the honor of carefully thinking over what I have already written in this series, will be in a favorable position to re-examine the position of the Socialist movement as laid down in my first article.

You will remember it was stated that the position of the social reformer is an illogical and (from the standpoint of social progress, an ineffective one. The social reformer passes legislation in an haphazard, opportunist fashion with the end in view of patching and bettering the existing social order. Therein is the final and complete futility of his position revealed. The social evils of the present day are the effects of the existing social order; are the inevitable and natural products of the present system of ownership of land and capital. Social reforms of every kind deal with the effects, and leave the root causes untouched—mop up the floor and leave the tap full on.

We have seen, in the previous articles, that poverty and its attendant evils, are the effects of a cause which is operative the world over—the private ownership of the means of wealth production. The polarisation of riches with the inevitable polarisation of poverty is the evil child of the existing social order which we know as Capitalism. It is futile to attempt to solve this pressing problem by passing social reforms, by the application of any "solution" which deals with effects and not with causes.

The sane, logical method to pursue is that of the Socialist—that since Capitalism is the common cause of so many evils the only course to pursue is to abolish Capitalism itself. The scientific Socialist, whilst denying the futility of social reform within the existing social order, affirms his belief in the overthrow of capitalism and the progressive utility of social revolution.

The aim and object of the Socialist movement is to assist and to guide the workers in this task of social revolution. It believes that the means of wealth production should be owned and controlled by the workers; that the processes of wealth production should be operated, not, as at present, for the individual aggrandisement of a small and privileged class, but should function in order that each individual in society should have his or her fair share of the necessities and amenities of life.

In other words, Socialism is the socialization of the wealth producing machinery of the world, the conscious control, by society, of those economic forces which have for so long enslaved submissive mankind.

In order that this position may be clearly seen, it is necessary, once again, to enter into first principles and to analyse cause and effect.

We have seen—have we not?—that the trend of social evolution of the last fifty years is towards the socialization of all the machinery of wealth production, but that this process of change is more or less subconscious, largely the product of the pressure of economic necessity, and is for the exclusive benefit of the capitalist class. Trusts and State Industries increase in number and in power, until we are faced with a condition of affairs almost approaching an industrial monarchy.

This condition of affairs cannot continue for long. The growing standard of intelligence of the workers everywhere, the increasing pressure of economic conditions already almost intolerable will sound the death knell of the Capitalist regime.

Private ownership and individual appropriation must disappear, must give place to social ownership and social control.

How is this to be accomplished? By what means

and in what manner will the workers exercise control over the economic life of society?

The socialization of land and capital implies complete control by society. In the past, government has concerned itself with the government of persons, with the enactment of legislation dealing with persons. Before the advent of the present State and representative government, government was in the hands of the elders of the family, of priests and of kings. Disputes took the form of combat with arms, arguments as to right and wrong were settled by duels, tournaments and wars. Government was of the most opportunist kind, mankind was the hapless victim of an environment over which he had no means of control.

The inadequacy of combat and of warfare, the pressure of economic progress forced the establishment of more democratic and intelligent governmental institutions. Parliaments, elected upon a more or less popular vote, took the place of the divine right of kings, the old method of settlement by force or by chance gave way to the more intelligent and democratic method of argument and debate.

The State grew in power, and with the rapid growth of capitalist industry, it encroached more and more upon the economic field—found itself compelled, in the defence of social rights, to assume the ownership and control of many and diverse industries.

But these State-owned industries are not socialized industries. Controlled by the capitalist class, operated by the representatives of that class these State industries are almost as anti-social as the genuinely owned capitalist concerns.

We must not forget, however, that the establishment of State industries and the extension of elective powers paves the way to socialization. The increased power of the workers everywhere as the result of the extension of the suffrage, must, perforce, assist in the struggle for economic emancipation. The State, which, for so long, has been used as the bulwark of the propertied class against the wealth-producing class, will be used, by the workers, to establish the co-operative commonwealth.

Heretofore, the State has been the favorite playground of the possessing classes. They have used the powers invested in the State to buttress the system whereby they secured their wealth, to suppress every attempt made by the dispossessed class at economic emancipation. The State has been the weapon which has been used, **BUT THE POWER OF THAT WEAPON CAME FROM THE POSSESSION OF LAND AND CAPITAL. THE POSSESSION OF THE MEANS OF WEALTH PRODUCTION WAS THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE. THE RAISON D'ETRE OF ALL GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS.**

It has been said, and with truth, that to possess land and capital is to be the complete owner of all the people who work and have their being from that land and capital. It can also be asserted, with equal truth, that government without the ownership and control of the machinery of wealth production is but an empty dream.

The activities of society will be primarily and essentially social only when society exercises complete control over its economic life. Instead of private ownership there must be social ownership, in the place of individual monopoly must come collective control.

Therein does the Socialist thinker display the logic of his reasoning, and the truth of his position. The Socialist knows that in the social ownership of land and of capital democracy will cease to be an idle dream. The Social Revolution ushers in the admin-

istration of things, and in so doing renders unnecessary the government of persons.

Social reformers are political tinkers and quacks who stroll through the economic field seeking what they may patch. They have not yet realized that until the people of the world cease to patter party politics and to think economically, there can be no economic progress. Where there is no vision the people perish, and where there are social reformers there is confusion worse confounded.

This socialization of the machinery of wealth production, brought into existence by the workers of all countries through the instrumentality of the State, sounds the death-knell, not only of Capitalism but of the State as an institution. Says Engels:

"The State was the official representative of society as a whole, the gathering of it together into a visible embodiment. But it was this only insofar as it was the State of that class which itself represented, for the time being, society as a whole; in ancient times the State of slave-owning citizens; in the middle ages the feudal lords; in our own time, the bourgeoisie. When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary. As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection; as soon as class rule and the individual struggle for existence based upon our present anarchy in production with the collisions and excesses arising from these are removed, nothing more remains to be repressed, and a special repressive force, a State, is no longer necessary. The first act by virtue of which the State really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society, the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society, this is, at the same time, its last independent act as a State. State interference in social relations becomes in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The State is not abolished. *It dies out.*"

Last Article: Towards the Goal.

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