

railroad system is operated as a unit for the single purpose of securing efficiency in war production. Steel and munition factories, many in number and great in output, are entirely operated by the government. Thousands of other factories have been operated for some time under government control, although immediately by the owners. It is estimated that probably about seven million men and women are at present employed in industries under the control of the British government. Moreover, the government has entered the field of the middleman and is doing collective buying on a very large scale, just as we ourselves are.

Similar conditions prevail in France and in Italy. The government of Italy is said now to control in the neighborhood of 2,500 establishments, with approximately three million workers. In France the control of the government over industry is even more extended and intense. Even countries not in the war have found it necessary, on account of the disturbance of industry and the shortage of supplies of one kind and another, to undertake economic functions in character and extent hardly thought of hitherto.

The culmination of the whole process seems to be reached in the project for collective purchasing for all the Allies in the matter of metals, food and other articles.

On the steps which the United States has taken it is not necessary to enlarge. We are controlling the iron and steel industry, the coal business, the wheat market, and are reaching indirectly to the control of retail trade in a variety of articles.

These things are welcomed by Socialists as steps towards the permanent establishment of Socialism. Many other people look upon them with fear because they have the same belief. It is important, therefore, to study and discuss this trend and its aftermath.

In the opinion of the editor of this series, a distinction must be made between Socialism and mere state economic