

DIFFICULTIES OF ORGANIZATION:

First, regarding the difficulty of organizing work, take Scotland alone, with something less than five million inhabitants. Think of all the houses of business in Edinburgh and other great towns and in every village and hamlet, worked from one centre. You may say it is done now by the Post Office. Precisely, because the Post Office performs a simple service where the prime matter is delivery, and the prime economy is to avoid cross delivery; it is a simple, almost mechanical, work; the main work, the letters themselves, are produced by the individual thousands of the public. It would be a more apt comparison if an agent of State were himself, after hearing the individual circumstances, to write every letter and to post them at the proper time, just as he now transmits and delivers them. And in the Socialist Commonwealth the many busy hands that are now conducting tens of thousands of businesses, lesser or greater, throughout the land, and in most cases occupy their position precisely because they are capable, would at best remain as mere agents of a central organizing power. Nor are we helped by the analogy of great trusts or combinations, especially conspicuous in America, where vast industries are controlled by a few men. For apart from the difficulty that it is one thing for some industries to be controlled, and quite another thing for all industries to be controlled, there remains this difficulty, that as far as great combinations and trusts have been successful they have been successful because great power and great wealth have been permanently concentrated in few hands, and a new baronial or feudal system has been reconstituted; only instead of lordly barons in their castles we have great financial magnates in their counting-houses, sitting enthroned there, not for a few weeks or few months, but permanently. Hence if there is to be any successful business organisation on the scale supposed, the democratic principles of starting fair, of popular control, and of rotation of office, all must be thrown overboard. Not even the world-famous Scottish capacity for business could carry on any concern with success if with every new moon there was to be a new manager. Rather we must hand ourselves over to the tender mercies of rulers and organizers who must be few, who must be permanent, who must be autocratic.

I have said Scotland—but why Scotland? Why not the forty-five millions of the United Kingdom or the four hundred millions of the British Empire? Mr. MacDonald speaks of 'the community' and of the 'nation-making epoch' as if it was closed, (1) and like other Socialists assumes complete, cut-and-dried and distinct units, that can each form a Socialist Commonwealth. For most truly no Socialist organization is possible with shifting frontiers and shifting populations. But the facts are wholly contrary to the assumption that is required by Socialism. Take the last sixty years only: compare the political map and the statistics of population in 1846, and then at each successive ten years look at the changes in both. It would take me several hours to give you a mere catalogue of these changes. Only think, for example, of the extraordinary changes of the political areas ruled from London, from Paris, and from Berlin. Or again, think of the millions of men and women in a twofold vast migration, one from Europe to America, the other from the open country to the towns. And there is no sign that these changes are coming to an end. Frontiers and population are in a state of flux, now no less than sixty years ago, and their uncertainty makes the proposed Socialistic organization of national industry an impossibility. Society would have to be crystallized, frontiers stereotyped, international, nay, even inter-urban, migration stopped, all men confined each to his own district, like serfs in the old time or indentured coolies in the new time.

DIFFICULTY OF SUPPLYING WANTS.

Much more could be said on this first difficulty of organization, but I must pass on to the second, the difficulty of supplying different wants. A man's individuality, and let me say still more a woman's individuality, must be sacrificed: there is no room for peculiarities, idiosyncrasies, individual requirements. No doubt the ordinary food, the ordinary clothing, ordinary furniture, ordinary houses, ordinary amusements, you could get by presenting a labor ticket at the Government stores, or in whatever way distribution was managed; but all production would be wholesale, on a large scale, after an official pattern; instead of facing a body of producers and sellers eager to cater for every separate want, you would face an official body to whom any fresh want would mean more trouble and more brain work, with no prospect of private profit as an incentive; and thus you would seek in vain to pro-

cure what would be out of the routine of Government production; the practical consequence would be that grown men and women would be assimilated to boys or girls at a boarding-school, and we must all be as soldiers with barrack-room uniformity. There could be no genuine liberty of consumption.

DIFFICULTY OF THE ASSIGNMENT OF EMPLOYMENTS.

The third difficulty is the assignment of different employments, and we ask in vain, How can it be done? For every one to take turn and turn about at every trade is so appalling a waste of power, so great a violation of division of labor, as to be out of the question; to choose what you like best is to leave undone necessary employments that are liked the least; to give a greater reward to the rough, unpleasant tasks is to depreciate the higher and more delicate tasks: the chimney-sweep or scavenger would get more than the physician or the schoolmaster. A courageous effort to meet these difficulties was indeed made by Edward Bellamy, in his famous novel, 'Looking Backwards'; but I need not dwell on his work, as it has long been repudiated by Bebel, who called him 'a Utopian and no Socialist.' (1) Indeed, the Socialist leaders shrink from publishing any practical details of the future Socialist State, and evade practical criticisms by keeping to generalities. (2)

DIFFICULTY OF REMUNERATING WORK.

And the same may be said of the fourth difficulty, the assignment of remuneration. It is often done very badly now. Social reformers know the evil, and are striving as far as possible to remedy it. But remuneration even now is often done very well. Take, for example, the elaborate rates for piece work in the Lancashire cotton trade, fixed by representatives of masters and men, and arrived at by technically trained experts; (3) or, take the joint agreement that has worked so satisfactorily for five years or more in the coal-mining industry of the four great States of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. (4) How could Socialism deal with cases like these? For a little while, indeed, they might simply continue the previous work of conciliatory experts; but any change of production and any invention would make the old standards inapplicable, and no criterion would be at hand for the new, no outside current rates or Trade Union rates, and all would have to be left to official good pleasure. But no body of men, least of all a body of officials, are to be trusted with arbitrary power in their hands.

DIFFICULTY OF SUPPLYING A MOTIVE.

Lastly, but not not least, comes the difficulty of supplying a motive. It has been pointed out, again and again, how unlikely is the order and punctuality, the incessant and strenuous labor, the keen eye for technical improvement, the watch for markets, that is stimulated by the fear of dismissal on the part of the employed, or bankruptcy on the part of the employers, and by the hope of advancement and enrichment on the part of both. But in the Socialist State there could be neither dismissal nor bankruptcy to fear, and the honors and rewards that might be held out to the industrious and inventive would be a shadowy reward compared with the substantial gains that our present social arrangements do not indeed always give (alas! far from it), but at least hold out as an allurements. Hence the universal self-interest of indolent mankind in the Socialist State would condone, not indeed absolute idleness, but habitual slack work, easy-going habits, general negligence, that it would be everybody's business, and therefore nobody's business, to correct.

(To be concluded next week.)

Messrs. Barningham and Co., Ltd., Dunedin, are manufacturers of the famous improved Zealandia Cooking Range, which is recognised by housewives as one of the most economical and convenient in the market. The firm also makes verandah castings and tomb railings at very moderate rates...

Our readers will be interested in the announcement of Messrs. A. and T. Inglis, Dunedin, that their annual colossal sale will commence on August 1, and will continue until September 12, during which time the whole of the magnificent stock, valued at upwards of £60,000, will be disposed of at large reductions. Persons desiring a sale catalogue can have same post free on sending name and address...

1 *Woman and Socialism*, p. vii., 10th German edition. Stuttgart, 1891. A detailed refutation of Bellamy is given in Cathrein-Gettelmann, pp. 285-287, 320-321, 331 note.

2 See pp. 223-244 of Cathrein-Gettelmann.

3 B. and E. Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, 2nd ed., pp. 195-204.

4 W. J. Ashley, *Adjustment of Wages*, 1903, Appendix IV.