

of all these things? Either their present owners must give them up of their own free will, or they must be bought out, or they must be expropriated—that is, turned out by force and violence from the things they possess. Now, the first of these alternatives is hardly likely to happen. Human nature being what it is, it would be the wildest of dreams to expect that the present owners will voluntarily hand over their possessions to the State.

Will, then, the State purchase all these things? This is hardly a promising solution, for, in the first place, whence will come the money for their purchase and how will it be raised? Or, if it is left as a charge against the State, as some Socialists propose, how, with such a heavy handicap at the start, can it hope to prosper? Think of what it means. The capital invested in English railways in 1902 was nearly £1,300,000,000. That is one branch of industry alone. Now take into account the cotton industry, the iron industry, the shipping industry, and the host of other manufacturing and distributing agencies, and add to that the value of the land of the country, and we arrive at a total that is so vast as to be with difficulty grasped by the imagination. Purchase on anything like equitable terms does not seem a possible or practicable solution, and, to do the propounders of Socialism justice, they carefully avoid promising to adopt it. Some of them do indeed suggest a system of purchase, but with limitations that make it more like a species of theft than purchase. Such solutions as the payment to present owners by bonds, which can then be heavily taxed until the charge is extinguished, or by terminable annuities, are only forms of deferred confiscation, and resemble the Chinese method of execution by taking off a slice at a time. On the other hand, there is a school of Socialists who make no secret of their plan of simply clearing out the present proprietors by force. They are the revolutionary Socialists of various degrees, and are pretty numerous on the Continent and in America, and include most of the Social Democrats in this country. In this connection it is worthy of note that one of the chief items in the programme of the Social Democratic Federation is the 'repudiation of the National Debt.' As all the money in the Post Office Savings Bank and much of the money in many other savings banks is invested in Consols, that would include the confiscation of all the savings of thousands of thrifty people who have put aside small sums, often by great self-denial. I do not know how far a programme of this kind will receive assent, but a very elementary sense of justice would place the ordinary man in revolt against it.

The advocates of expropriation justify their action by reasoning that all property is the outcome of robbery, and that consequently it is almost a virtue to dispossess those who own it, but neither history, philosophy, nor political economy can be appealed to for support for such a contention.

However, for the purpose of discussing the practicability of a Socialist State, let us put aside the difficulty of acquiring possession of the instruments of production, etc. Let us suppose the apparently impossible case to occur: that in some fashion or other, either by purchase, gradual processes, or some sudden and successful revolution, we have arrived at the stage in which the Collectivist State has come into being. Obviously we must suppose also that this revolution has been world-wide, or nearly so, for whatever internal advantages might accrue to the members of such a State, there would be no guarantee of their permanence if one or more strong individualist and military States existed outside their borders. Such States would be a constant menace, and a constant source of attraction to those ambitious and intelligent men to whom the rewards of a Socialist State would appear insufficient. And I will pass over with simple mention the other problem that suggests itself, as to what would happen if the inhabitants of countries ill-favored by Nature, of scanty resources, or of ingrained poverty, desired, as would be quite natural, to enter countries whose natural endowments made them desirable residences.

We will leave aside these difficulties, however pressing and fundamental they may be, and take it for granted that such a State has been established and can hope for some stability, and we will now examine some of the problems that will present themselves for solution.

We must recall first of all that the common ownership of everything productive has given to each citizen exactly the same rights as every other citizen. Master and servant, rich and poor, become words without meaning, for where all are equally rich and all have an equality of ownership such differences could not exist. And Socialist teachers and the platforms of Socialist conventions lay down as a fundamental tenet of their creed that there must be an equality of rights and duties in the State.

Every one will have to work in order to live, and all will have the same claim to remuneration. Whether a man serves as the head of a great department, planning and arranging the host of details that his office demands, or whether he is engaged in the humblest function that depends upon the great man's policy, there cannot in fairness be any distinction made between their pay. Each one will give so much time—so much socially necessary labor, as Marx has named it—and therefore each one will deserve the same reward.

In such a State, then, certain problems will arise, the solution of which must be considered before we can realise what the conditions of existence will be, both for the State and for the individual. I know that many leading Socialists urge that such discussion is futile. First, they say, realise the Social Revolution, create the Social State, and the problems will be easily settled; they will, in fact, settle themselves. That is the doctrine of Jaures, the French leader, and of Ramsay MacDonald, the Englishman. But that is like asking a man to pull down and destroy his well-built and well-appointed house because of certain defects in its arrangements before showing him the plans of his new one. It is as though an architect should promise a palace of beautiful design, of unheard-of splendor and conveniences, and yet decline to produce any working plans to justify his promises. Yet this is the line of argument often adopted. Socialist writers are, however, very like other writers. They may deprecate the discussion of details, yet these details are so vital to their scheme that in their writings they have been led, when expounding their views, to a description of things as they will be in the Socialist State. We are thus enabled to examine and criticise not only their anticipations and promises, but also the social conditions which they conceive will follow the adoption of their ideas. Marx, Engels, Bebel, Stern, Kautsky, Ferri, and even the cautious Ramsay MacDonald, have all written books which may be studied with profit and which offer a foundation for the considerations I shall now advance. The chief problems of the Socialist State may accordingly be grouped as follows:—

- I. How will the work of production be organised?
- II. How will the produce be distributed?
- III. How will labor be organised and distributed?
- IV. How will labor be paid? (and, interwoven with these questions,)
- V. How will the equality of rights, which is the essence and foundation of Socialism, be maintained?

THE PROBLEMS OF PRODUCTION.

We will consider these questions in order, and to begin with we will investigate the problem of the organisation of production—i.e., we will consider how in the Socialist State the providing of all materials will be managed. First of all, let me remind you of the volume of trade in this country. In 1904 imports and exports amounted to 922 million pounds worth of goods. This gives us some idea of the size of the work to be undertaken. At present this huge volume of trade is managed by a host of individuals, each one of them more or less a specialist in his work. Businesses are organised by men who seek out markets and endeavor to supply them; who have agents abroad and at home, keen to make their work succeed, for success means wealth and failure poverty. In Preston, for instance, with cotton for our principal industry and many subordinate industries, we find businesses which have grown up in long years, with agents in Manchester and markets all over the world. Think of the number of mills, workshops, and manufactories in this town, each managed by men to whom success means independence, wealth, ease, power—each owner a specialist in his business, ever seeking to keep, to consolidate, to extend his business, and finding work for the workers as the result of his energies. Now multiply these local activities by all the cities, towns, and villages of the kingdom, and you have the total activities that result in our huge volume of trade. How will this vast business be managed in the Socialist State? It is all to be in the hands of one central authority—with local agencies whose sole business it will be to carry out the directions of the central authority. This is freely recognised by Socialist teachers and writers. It is the essence of their case that production must be centralised and regulated by a supreme authority acting on behalf of the community. Thus this central authority will have to regulate all this vast volume of business; to co-ordinate it, so that there shall be harmony not only in the productive effort in each business, but in the relations of